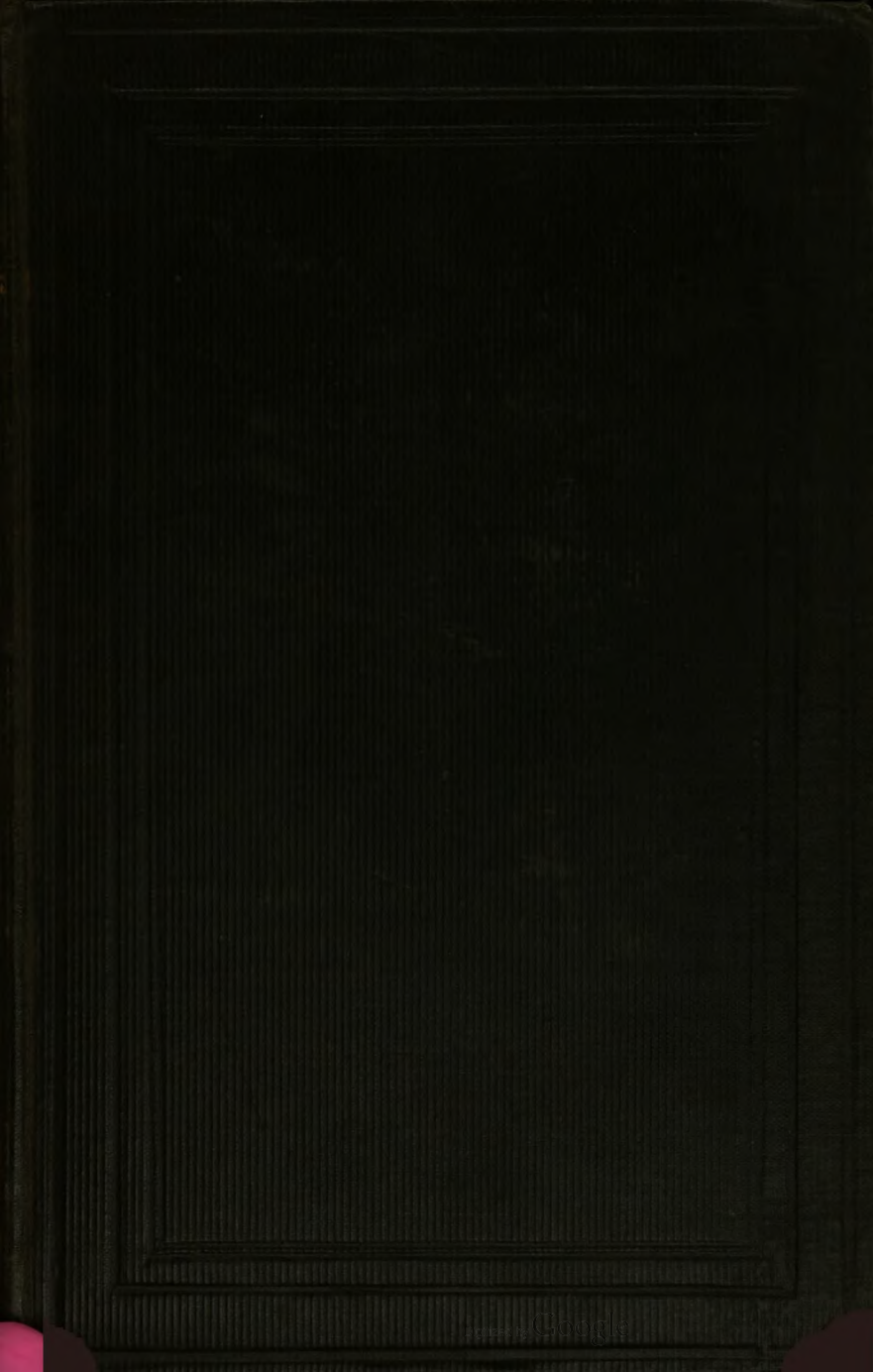

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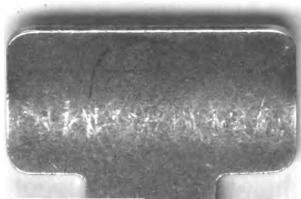
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LIVES
OF CERTAIN
FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

In the Fourth Century.

FOR THE
INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG.

EDITED BY
THE REV. WM. J. E. BENNETT, M.A.
PERPETUAL CURATE OF ST. PAUL'S, KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

VOL. I.



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MDCCCXLVII.

SOLI DEO GLORIA.



PREFACE.

THIS little volume is intended for the use of young persons. It makes no pretence to depth of learning, or any great degree of research, being principally compiled from various works which are accessible to all.

Two pursuits are involved in it—Religion and Biography, and both of the highest kind. Those who have never thought of either seriously, may here perhaps kindle the torch which shall in after life, by more mature study, light them forward in the deep things of God.

The first of these pursuits—Religion—is, of course, self-evident to be most important. Whosoever he be that reads or thinks at all, must needs both think and read about Religion. Whether he be the most bigoted and perverse of one portion of the Church, or the most latitudinarian of another; whether he resign his

judgment uncared for to the custody of others, or exercise it uncontrolled in the license of his own will—still there is this great truth before him, that in some way, either higher or lower Religion is the first, because it is the most lasting subject of human life. And for the second pursuit—Biography—even that of great captains, great lawyers, or great statesmen, carries with it to the minds of all the most instructive interest; but when Biography is combined with Religion, and we behold before us the great and good of ancient times in the things of God, then such a study becomes doubly interesting, and brings with it a double fruit, because therein is combined the highest order of subject matter with the highest order of human character.

To see how from small beginnings greatness and celebrity have been achieved; to watch in the child the first symptoms of the spirit which afterwards has led to wonderful and heroic actions, leading on the human race under its guidance to grandeur and glory, is, even in temporal things, a sight beautiful to look upon, and the life even of Alexander or Napoleon has a charm about it, which surpasses the more philosophical analysis of the mere historian.

How much more so is this the case when we pass away from the temporal history of men to their spiritual history ; and how much more so still, when we advance into the ages when the Church first began, and behold her early bishops, martyrs, and confessors, rising up before us, and, with the Spirit of God, subduing the world, and winning nations to the fold of Christ.

In the biography of the first Christian ages, men seem to spring forth, not as they do now from the ordinary repose of a quiescent orthodoxy ; but there is rather a suddenness of life assumed, sometimes out of direct heathenism, or sometimes out of that carnal philosophy which so long polluted and disturbed the ancient world. Great Christians seem to issue into life, as it were, full armed, a sort of Cadmean progeny ; such, for instance, as St. Ambrose, a layman one day—chosen bishop the next. They fight the battles of a faith which they learn, not from parents, nor from schools, but from the special intervention of the Holy Spirit ; they plunge in the first ardour of the divine light into the deepest truths of the Gospel, and master them at once ; they bear the Cross deeply set within their hearts, and sustained on high in

the full confidence of their faith, fear nothing. A living stream of fire glows within, and leads them on to withstand kings and to beard multitudes; all things give way before them, and even when they die, it is only by their suffering and their blood to propagate the Church the further. By the study of the cell, the oratory of the preacher, or the power of the episcopal chair, they all work onwards in parallel lines; and whether they testify their Lord by the confessor's sufferings, or the martyr's crown, it is the same advance made by one united body, in the kingdom of the Gospel; whether kings are to be rebuked, as by St. Ambrose,—heresy to be subdued, as by St. Athanasius,—or heathen philosophy to be overcome, as by St. Augustine,—again it is the same. In all the Spirit of God is manifest, guiding and leading men's hearts, as now we never see, and confirming the promise, then still breathing on the infant Church,—“As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you.”

All these are matters of thought and objects of admiration, worthy of the highest and the best. As pictures or statues set before the

artist in his studio, to gaze upon and fill the mind with a correct and classical spirit, so these holy men stand before us, objects of wonder and patterns of godly imitation. While we read, we cannot but think how little we of this present age are in comparison with them; how poor our theology as well as our learning; how slight and inefficient our devotedness and sanctity of life; how timid and lukewarm our zeal. But though we cannot approach, even remotely, the character of their Christianity, still the perusal of their lives will not leave us without benefit. It will present us to ourselves, and shew our miserable infirmity, and so doing, stir us up to something akin to a desire to go and do likewise, which desire may, in God's good time, realise itself in action.

How bigoted and narrow-minded is the great bulk of Christian men of this present age. I except no Church or party—it is the mark of all; even of the Romanist as well as the Sectarian; the men of the Church of England as well as the Puritan and Non-Conformist; but especially the latter. How men seem shut up in a little insular sort of religion, and with their own special habits of private judgment, the religion of most com-

prised in a negative, and the description of their faith involving no more than a protest against the errors of others. Alas! where is the generous Catholicity of ancient times? Where the mind that can look fearlessly out from the narrow cell of one small national Church, and one little half century of a life, into the wide and expanded area of the Church of all ages and all countries, and throw itself confidingly into the arms of the Universal Kingdom of the Lord Jesus? Where are the bishops now that live the lives of Jerome or of Basil? that dare to rebuke kings and princes, as Ambrose? or that confess the truth of the Church with Athanasius? Where among kings and princes do we find a Theodosius, greater perhaps than all, who, loving the Church, obeys the bishop to his own humiliation, and throws down the royalty of his present life, that he may win the crown of a future kingdom as a son and servant of the Church? No. Catholicity in the present age, because it is not Protestantism, therefore must be Popery; and Christianity, because it is not of the Church of England, is denied to exist at all; as though, because there may be errors in some points, there is truth in none, and a creed

which consists in a mere negation of what is false, must consequently possess the whole of what is true.

The pure tone of Christianity in which we are naturally deficient, and which we therefore ought most anxiously to cultivate, is that of the real Catholic Faith, by which is meant not that of the Church of Rome, with which ignorant men confound it, but that of the ages of the first six general councils. It presents one of the strangest inconsistencies of the present day, to behold the principal men of our legislature, with large and comprehensive minds, opening out all the paths of trade and commerce, yet shutting close the gates of religion and the Church; the very same men advocating with liberal latitudinarianism the extension of Maynooth and the advance of the Roman Church in some, and yet withal, stigmatising with hard names and party abuse any approach to the likeness of Rome in others. How such men can foster, in the consideration of their identity, the errors of a Church on one side, and asperse and oppose them in the other, surpasses comprehension; liberal and bigoted in the same act; pouring out of the same fountain sweet waters and

bitter. It is daily before us, that the most enlightened men in intellectual studies and in civil politics, are the most narrow-minded in religious studies and the politics of the Church: the most far-sighted and free-trading in commerce, the most short-sighted, cramped, and narrow in the Gospel and the kingdom of God. And while they think that they are opening wide the gates of the Gospel by the freedom of private judgment, they do not see that they fetter it, by forbidding it to rest on the foundation of Catholicity. While they loosen from the chains of antique acts of Parliament and legal penalties one portion of the Church, they continue to bind down and hamper the other by fresh additions of a miserable and paltry legislation—a legislation, the difficulties and absurdities of which increase with every year, and grow with every session.

What we require in our legislature, in our universities, in our schools, in our books and in our churches, is an *enlarged Catholic mind*, a getting rid of the strange bigotry and narrow-mindedness of faith which now besets all. The real Catholic mind will not cramp itself by the modern innovations of a Church which owes its

peculiarities to decrees subsequent to the six first ages; nor again will it suffer itself, under the guise of liberalism, to be bound by the fetters of little sects, which are the creatures of yesterday. Can that which was not heard of in the first six ages be essential to salvation?—or that which owes its existence to the ideas of an individual?—or that whose essence consists in a mere negation? If not, then can neither Romanism, nor Sectarianism, nor Protestantism, as such, contain the Catholic mind of which we are in search; it must be something beyond them all. I except therefore none who tie themselves to these names,—no party, no Church, no sect. We must ALL cast ourselves out of ourselves, and get our mould from the primitive ages, in which the purity of the faith was still unsullied. Such a mind would cure the Romanists of many distressing perversions of God's word, and Protestants of many little mean jealousies and paltry superstitions. It would equally demolish the novel idea of the Papal supremacy, as surely as it would the still more novel idea of State supremacy, and the government of a Church by Acts of Parliament. It would banish from among us the many-headed hydra of Protestant dissent,

and cancel the schismatic deviations from the Church, which now so unfortunately prevail. Unity might again, with God's grace, exist, and Charity, springing up with Faith and Hope, suggest to us once more the three groundworks of our most holy religion.

Is this a chimera? If we think it is, it will always remain so. If we act as though it were not, it will soon cease to be so. Is it an impossibility? "With God nothing is impossible." It is not in this generation that we dare hope to behold its fruits; but the Catholic mind of which I speak, sows the seed in faith, and leaves the fruit to God. This little book is such seed. Both the writer and the editor are hopeful for the young; and for the young, in that which is to come, long to anticipate a higher tone and a purer principle than, as yet, even for themselves, they dare so much as dream.

But they who will be penitent with St. Augustine, who will preach with St. Chrysostom, and rebuke kings with St. Ambrose, will soon take hold of the Catholic mind of which we speak. Even in the mature, and those already trained in a different school, we behold an improvement. A new feeling creeps along their

hearts, and more generous thoughts, when they sympathize with the holy actions of such men as here stand forth for their perusal. And if so in the mature, much more so in the young. The spirit of real Catholicity we surely need not, and we surely ought not, to despair of finding. When the children of this generation shall take their place in this world's battle, the Church will find it. May God of His infinite mercy speed them; and when we ourselves are passed onward to our final rest, furnish them with wisdom and with courage to continue the course which now they are beginning, and so remain steadfast unto the end.

WILLIAM J. E. BENNETT.

St. Paul's.

Feast of St. Philip and St. James, 1847.

ORDER OF THE LIVES.

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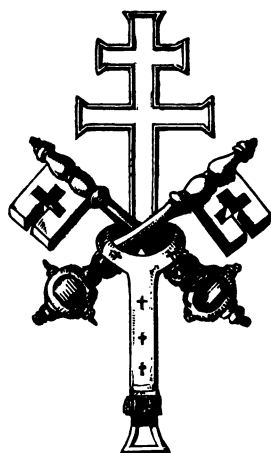
ST. ATHANASIUS.

A sea of troubles tried thee, till at length,
Borne back by thy strong sinew, they upreared
Thy might, and sternly bore thee in thy strength
Onward, till on the Eternal Rock appear'd
Truth's loyal champion, to all time rever'd.

Great Athanasius! beaten by wild breath
Of calumny, and exile, and of wrong,
Thou wert familiar grown with frowning death,
Looking him in the face all thy life long,
Till thou and he were friends, and thou wert strong.

The "Eye of Alexandria," raised on high,
Unto all Christendom a beacon light:
Thou from our tossing waves and stormy sky
Art in thy peaceful haven hid from sight;
But still thy name hath leave to guide us thro' the night.

THE CATHEDRAL.



LIFE OF ST. ATHANASIUS.

CHAPTER I.

Yes, thou art launch'd on the great sea of being,
Nor aught of things that are, or things to be,
Can wrest thy birthright—Immortality!
. 'Tis a dark, rough sea,
But there is one hath made a bark for thee,
And sitteth at the helm to guide thee hence
Unto a shore where all is innocence.

REV. J. WILLIAMS.

**BIRTH OF ATHANASIUS—EARLY TRAINING—HIS CHILDISH
SPORTS WITNESSED BY BISHOP ALEXANDER—RESULTS—
HIS EDUCATION—CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA—ITS SCHOOL—
ATHANASIUS THE PRIMATE'S SECRETARY.**

WE are familiar with the name of Athanasius, from its connexion with that form of words read in church on certain appointed Sundays and Holy days, known as the "Confession of our Christian faith, commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius."

Whether that confession is indeed the composition of him whose name it bears, is extremely doubtful. It seems more probable that it is the work of a somewhat later period, and of an unknown author, though it has been commonly received in the Christian Church as a correct exposition of the orthodox faith, and embodies the doctrine which it was the object of St. Athanasius' life to maintain. But his name is also connected, for those who have any acquaintance with early ecclesiastical history, with the composition of that creed which forms a part of our Communion service, and takes its name from the great council held at Nice, A.D. 325, where it was accepted and promulgated as an antidote to the errors by which the Church was at that time threatened. And St. Athanasius must always be numbered by the ecclesiastical historian among the greatest of those holy saints, martyrs, and confessors, to whom the Church has long since given the title of "the Fathers," thus commemorating them as men to whom her childhood owed its spiritual nature, and to whose writings (many of which we are so happy as yet to possess), she has been accustomed to look up with a filial reverence.

Of St. Athanasius it has indeed been said, that to commend him is to commend virtue itself; that he was the pattern for bishops, and his doctrine the rule of orthodoxy; he was an eye and a light to the

world, the pillar of the faith, and a second John the Baptist.*

St. Athanasius was born, circa A. D. 298, in the flourishing city of Alexandria, the throne of Christianity in Egypt; the Church whose school of divinity was the best trained, and whose patriarch was chief over the other Egyptian bishops. At the time of Athanasius' birth the patriarch was Alexander, a good and faithful ruler of the Church. The names of the parents of the saint have not been transmitted to us; this much only we know, that they were remarkable for their goodness and piety, and so the first lessons that their only child (for we learn that Athanasius had neither brother nor sister) would imbibe, were probably those of affection and holiness; and who can tell how much influence their example, during these early years, may have had upon the future bishop and saint?

We do not find much account of his childhood; one story is, however, told of it, which has been considered as almost of a prophetic character.

The good archbishop Alexander was one day waiting in his dwelling for some expected guests, when, happening to look out of the window, his attention was arrested by a group of children playing on the sea shore. They had taken upon them

* Greg. Naz. quoted by Cave.

the various offices of an episcopal college, and one, the eldest, and, to all appearance, the leader of the little band, was personating the bishop, and imitating such of his functions as a child might be acquainted with. Some of his playmates were brought to him as catechumens, or candidates for baptism, whom he examined carefully, and then ordered to be admitted to the holy rite, imitating even the ceremony itself. The patriarch seems to have thought it right to inquire into the matter, probably wishing to explain to the children the impropriety of trespassing in their games upon holy limits, for he sent some of his attendant priests to summon the little self-appointed bishop and his college to his presence.

Not unnaturally, the boys were alarmed at the interruption, and possibly felt some consciousness that their play was not altogether right; for when the bishop asked, whether they had not been representing some of the Christian rites, fear got the better of truth, and one or two hesitated or denied it. But the little Athanasius stepped boldly forward, owned to their occupation, and by his straightforward, earnest manner, convinced the patriarch that he had entered upon it in innocence of heart, and without any irreverential feeling. We can imagine the kindly admonition bestowed on the little group; but the bishop did not stop there;

his interest was excited, he inquired into the parentage of Athanasius, and took upon himself the charge of his education, directing it with a view to the priesthood, though we can scarcely suppose him to have contemplated that his young favourite would one day succeed him on the episcopal throne, and fill so distinguished a part thereon.*

Athanasius seems to have early set his ambition more on becoming a useful, devoted labourer in the cause of his Crucified Master, than on worldly advancement. We are told that, although his natural intellect was acute and brisk, his reasoning powers quick and clear, and his judgment staid and solid, he soon abandoned secular learning and pursuits for the grave and severe studies of theology and controversy; in those days perhaps more necessary than now, because Christianity was then but struggling for the supremacy it has since obtained, and those professing it were often called upon to argue or defend their tenets, in subtle and learned discussions, with heathens or sectarians of great attainments and acute powers of reasoning.

The Church of Alexandria in particular was famous for her argumentative teaching. Her re-

* Since this was written, Mr. Keble's poem on this incident has been published, "Enacting Holy Rites."—*Lyra Innocentium*.

puted founder was the Evangelist St. Mark ; and as we find him to have been one of the chosen friends of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, he may be supposed to have himself more deeply felt, and more strongly impressed upon his disciples, the duty of converting the heathen, than was the case in any other primitive Church. So we are told, that it may be peculiarly called the missionary Church of antiquity. "Its catechetical school, founded it is said by the Evangelist himself, was a pattern to other Churches in its diligent and systematic preparation of candidates for baptism ; while other institutions were added, of a controversial character, for the purpose of carefully examining into the doctrines revealed in Scripture, and of cultivating the habit of argument and disputation."* Surrounded by the hieroglyphics of Egypt, the Christians of Alexandria had acquired an allegorical style, which was full of meaning, in proportion to the progress the disciples had made in sacred lore ; for in those days it was accounted so high a privilege to be instructed in the holy mysteries of Christian truth, that it was only by slow degrees, and with a long and severe probation, that converts received such instruction. At first the catechumens were only permitted to attend the reading of the Scrip-

* Arians of the fourth century.

tures and the sermons in the church. Then they advanced to the prayers and received the imposition of hands, as the sign of their spiritual progress. Shortly before their baptism they were taught the Lord's Prayer and the Creed; but not until after the regeneration of baptism itself were they admitted into the fulness of knowledge.

We find, however, that the Alexandrian Christians did not despise such general learning as by informing and exercising the understanding would naturally give its possessors greater influence in their positions. Thus Theonas, a predecessor of Archbishop Alexander, advises the Christians to become familiar with the poets, philosophers, orators, and historians of classical literature, and to make such information instrumental in advancing the One Great Truth, which should be the object of a Christian's life. And this is what St. Paul teaches, when he tells us to "do all to the glory of God."

We may then conclude, that St. Athanasius received both a refined and excellent education. Following up his good will to his young charge, Bishop Alexander made him his own secretary and amanuensis, and probably, at as early an age as was permitted, ordained him deacon.

CHAPTER II.

That heresies should strike (if truth be scanned
Presumptuously) their roots both wide and deep,
Is natural as dreams to feverish sleep.

WORDSWORTH.

ARIAN HERESY—FIRST SEEDS IN THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH—
ARIUS—HIS OUTBREAK—HIS PERSON—IS EXCOMMUNICATED
—SEEKS FOR ABSOLUTION—CONSTANTINE INTERFERES.

WE must now turn for a little while from the immediate history of Athanasius, to that of the times in which he lived, and to that great heresy, which first called his controversial powers into practice. This was the Arian heresy ; the leading feature of which was the denial that the second person of the ever blessed Trinity was indeed "Very God of very God, of one Substance with the Father." But though called by the name of Arius, because he was the most conspicuous promulgator of the doctrine, yet the poison may be discovered to have existed before his time, insidiously working in the Church of Antioch, which, in importance and power, rivalled that of Alexandria.

This church claimed St. Peter as her first bishop, and several successors of noble memory, such as Ignatius, Babylas, &c. But there seems to have been a restless, captious, self-complacent spirit in her, which is always prone to lead to heresy, exemplifying the truth of St. Paul's words: "Ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth."*

An early writer† calls Aristotle the bishop of the Arians, because most of those who were led into heretical paths were educated in his school, and trusted rather to their powers of argument and reasoning, than to simple faith, and the testimony of the early Church. They sought to prove everything by logical deductions, and thus hardened their hearts. For it is not in a cold spirit of human wisdom that we must inquire concerning the deep things of God, Who hath said: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Proofs of a tendency to heretical doctrines in the school of Antioch are not wanting. A bishop of that city, by name Paulus of Samosata, was deposed A.D. 272, for his heretical opinions, and was succeeded by Lucian, who for many years was likewise under sentence of excommunication.

Arius, although an Alexandrian by birth, was educated in Antioch; and almost the first thing we

* 2 Tim. iii. 7.

† Petavius, quoted by Newman.

hear of him, was his breaking the rules of ecclesiastical discipline, attacking his bishop, the Patriarch Alexander, when he was instructing his clergy on the subject of the Holy Trinity, and accusing him of teaching false doctrine. Archbishop Alexander was a man of the utmost patience and meekness; and so humble was he, and unwilling to foment discord where all should be harmony and unity, that he did not oppose this insubordination so resolutely as might have been wished, but soon afterwards summoned a meeting of his clergy, and allowed Arius to state his doctrines, and argue in defence of them. But this was only nourishing the mischief. Arius was eloquent, and well skilled in all the subtleties of argument; and his heretical doctrines spread rapidly. Alexander then wavered no longer, but excommunicated him. By this time, however, Arius had obtained to himself a considerable party; and he seems to have possessed qualities not unlikely to blind those who are ever seeking to have their intellects amused, rather than their hearts raised; and to whom the show of godliness is more captivating than quiet, unobtrusive worth.

In person, Arius is described as being very tall, lean, and meagre; and of a pale, melancholy countenance, which proceeded, not from the austerity of his life, but rather from his uneasy, restless mind. He was careless in his gait; his hair hung down his

shoulders, disgusting from its disorder. His voice was shrill and sharp, but his discourse was plausible and insinuating; and he knew well the art of winning those with whom he dealt. He held an important office in Alexandria, as public preacher; and probably had misled many, without their knowing it, before his open heresy was declared.

When the sentence of excommunication was pronounced against him, Arius sought refuge with Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, who, with some others, afforded him countenance and support. But almost all the leading men of the Church manifested the utmost indignation, both at his false doctrine, and at his disobedient conduct towards his spiritual superior. Arius, meantime, plainly shewed that his object was not a simple desire after truth; for he first said one thing, and then another, seeking to explain away some of his statements, and, by every sort of evasion, to obtain what for his temporal advantage he needed—reconciliation with Bishop Alexander, and re-admission into the Church. We must fear that he desired it rather from worldly motives, than from feeling how fearful it is to be cut off from the Holy Catholic Church as a punishment for sin, or his whole conduct would have been different. But Alexander, if he had been too indulgent before, was firm now, and steadily refused to absolve him until he recanted his errors.

At this time, the Emperor Constantine was on the throne. The striking story of his conversion, on the eve of giving battle to Maxentius (A.D. 312), is well known. Since that period, he had been a Christian to a certain extent,—I say to a certain extent, because he had not been baptized; neither did he give his whole heart to the Christian religion, but allowed pagan philosophy to retain some share in it. In the year 323, by gaining the great victory of Adrianople, he became master of the Roman world, and, hearing much about the controversies in the Church, turned his attention to them, and wrote a letter jointly to the Primate of Alexandria and to Arius, urging them to be at peace, and not disturb the Church by their divisions. This might have been very good advice, had a less important matter been at stake, but was ill-adapted to disputes affecting the vital doctrines of Christianity; and Bishop Hosius of Cordova, who bore the letter, and was both an excellent man, and Constantine's great friend and counsellor, advised that a general council should be called, for the purpose of deciding how the Catholic faith should be supported, and some formal declaration of orthodox doctrine made.

Constantine consented; and thus arose the celebrated Council of Nice.

CHAPTER III.

August consistory, in whose dread pale
Together comes assembled Christendom;
While kings, the nursing fathers, watch the scale.

THE CATHEDRAL.

COUNCIL OF NICE—ATHANASIUS PRESENT—DEATH OF BISHOP
ALEXANDER—ATHANASIUS SUCCEEDS—THE POPULAR JOY—
HE VISITS ST. ANTHONY—CONSTANTINE DEMANDS THE
ABSOLUTION OF ARIUS—ATHANASIUS REFUSES—HIS TRIAL
AND ACQUITTAL—SYNOD OF TYRE—ARSENIUS—RENEWED
ACCUSATIONS—IS BANISHED TO TREVES.

It was in the summer of 325 that this great and important council met at Nice, in Bithynia. About three hundred prelates,* with innumerable priests, deacons, and others, were present. The president was the eminent and saintly Hosius, Bishop of Cordova. Alexander brought with him his deacon Athanasius, whose talents in argument must have been remarked even there; for he was soon engaged

* "The number of the Fathers at the Nicene Council is generally considered to have been 318, the number of Abraham's servants. Gen. xiv. 14."—Oxf. Trans. of Hist. Tracts. Tract ii. chap. II. note e.

in dispute with Arius and several of his supporters, and contended against them so ably, that the Arian party turned their bitterest hatred and rage upon him, and affirmed that it was owing to him that the Archbishop Alexander had opposed them with such severity.

The emperor himself was present at this council ; but, although he appeared in the greatest state, yet he shewed the utmost deference to the bishops ; and, indeed, his whole demeanour through the council seems to have been worthy of a Christian monarch.*

We need not enter into the details of the discussion. Its result was that declaration of faith (to which allusion has before been made) used in our Communion Service, called the Nicene Creed. Five only of the bishops present hesitated to subscribe it. Of these, two were banished, together with Arius, against whom and his followers a solemn anathema was pronounced.

The whole session occupied two months. Five months after his return to Alexandria, the pious patriarch of that city expired, declaring his fittest successor to be his pupil and deacon Athanasius.

He, at the early age of twenty-eight, probably felt unwilling to take upon himself so great a responsibility : at all events, he absented himself, thinking, perhaps, that if he were not present, he would be

* Socrates, bk. i. chap. viii.

passed over. But God, who raises up to Himself whom He will, suffered not Athanasius to avoid the office.

We are told that, upon the bishop's death, "the people began loudly to demand Athanasius for their bishop; flocking to the church, and publicly putting up petitions in that behalf; continuing in their devotions night and day; and solemnly adjuring the prelates, who were come to settle a new bishop in the see, to consecrate and ordain him; till when they would neither leave the church themselves, nor suffer the bishops to depart: which was no sooner done, than it was received with universal joy and satisfaction, both of clergy and people, manifested by all open signs of festivity, and rejoicing, and cheerful looks; all men flocking to behold him, and offering common congratulations to each other, and thanks to God, for so great a blessing.* In the encyclical letter written by the council of Egypt, it is said: "The whole multitude, and all the people of the Catholic Church, assembled together as with one mind and body, and cried and shouted that Athanasius should be bishop of their Church; made this the subject of their public prayers to Christ, and conjured us to grant it for many nights and days. . . . They gave him the most excellent titles they could devise; calling him the good, the pious,

* Cave.

Christian, an ascetic, a genuine bishop.”* And, even at this distant period, we may add the tribute of our thankfulness; for Athanasius was the instrument, in the hands of his God, of preserving the Catholic faith “pure and undefiled.”

So now his childish anticipations were fulfilled; and Athanasius was installed Patriarch of Alexandria, A.D. 326.

The young prelate immediately commenced his episcopal labours with great energy. We find him visiting throughout his diocese; teaching, and reforming all abuses. At this time, he became acquainted with St. Anthony, who has been considered as the first hermit, and founder of the monastic system. Probably, however, there had been many before him who had dedicated their lives in like manner to God, but, unknown to fame,—

“ Their names decay,
Their fragrance passes quite away;
Like violets in the freezing blast
No vernal steam around they cast,—
But they shall flourish from the tomb,
The breath of God shall wake them into od’rous bloom.”†

St. Anthony’s hermit life was not of the gloomy character afterwards prevalent among some pious men who retired from the world. We are told that his hermitage was at the foot of a high and rocky

* Hist. Tracts, ii. 9.

† Keble.

mountain, from which welled forth a stream of limpid water, bordered by palms, which afforded an agreeable shade. The saint planted vines and shrubs around him, and cultivated fruit-trees and vegetables. We can well imagine the relief and soothing influence which Athanasius, who might already feel the burden of his episcopal cares heavy on him, would find in this tranquil spot, and in the friendship and communion of its gentle and devout inhabitant.* But soon he must return to Alexandria, and enter upon the sea of troubles which awaited him in his steady course of acting as God's especial minister.

The Emperor Constantine had been over-persuaded by the subtle opponents of the truth, who cared not by what falsehoods they gained their end, that Arius was unjustly sentenced; and accordingly he issued his imperial mandate to Athanasius to receive the excommunicated heretic into the pale of the Church.

“But Constantine found to his astonishment, that an imperial edict, which would have been obeyed in trembling submission from one end of the Roman empire to the other, even if it had enacted a complete political revolution, or endangered the pro-

* St. Athanasius wrote the life of St. Anthony at a subsequent period.

perty and privileges of thousands, was received with deliberate and steady disregard by a single Christian bishop.”*

The emperor threatened to depose him. But Athanasius, trusting in the goodness of his cause, and the support of Him Whose cause it was, answered with respectful dignity, “that the Catholic Church could not possibly hold communion with that heresy which plainly subverted the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

So unexpected an assertion of an authority higher than the imperial, displeased Constantine not a little; and the heretics who surrounded him lost no opportunity of stimulating his wrath against the holy bishop. At last he summoned Athanasius to Nicomedia, to answer certain unfounded accusations, of which some were merely childish, but from all of which he cleared himself, so that Constantine owned the prelate to be guiltless, and, on Athanasius’ return to his see, wrote to the Church of Alexandria a letter in high commendation of their primate.

This calm, however, was of short duration. In the year 335, St. Athanasius was again summoned to appear before the Synod of Tyre, and the same accusations were renewed against him. One of these was of the blackest nature. The holy patriarch was accused of having privately murdered Arsenius, an

* Milman.

Egyptian bishop, who was a heretic, and of having cut off the hand of his victim for the purposes of magic.

But God did not leave his faithful servant alone to bear the outrages of his enemies. The deceitful Arsenius had come privately, and, as he imagined, in complete disguise to Tyre ; but God, Who brings to light the hidden things of darkness, so ordered matters, that he was seen and recognized by the Bishop of Tyre, who took him into custody. When Athanasius stood before the tribunal, his false accusers came forward, proved their facts, and even produced the hand of the murdered man. Calm and unmoved, Athanasius demanded whether any there present had known Arsenius personally ? Many replied that they had. At that moment a man was brought into court, his person concealed in his mantle. When it was removed, the spectators at once recognized Arsenius. The archbishop showed to the court his two hands, and with quiet sarcasm observed, that the Creator had given two hands to man, his enemies must prove how Arsenius had become possessed of a third. This charge, of course, fell to the ground ; but there remained another, namely—that an official of the patriarch's had profaned some sacred vessels belonging to a church in his diocese.

Satisfactory evidence was indeed produced that

the whole accusation was an imposture, but in vain. However, before the sentence of deposition could be pronounced, Athanasius made a further appeal to Constantine's justice.

The emperor was passing through the streets of Constantinople, when he suddenly met a procession of ecclesiastics, with Athanasius at their head. Constantine pressed forward, but with a loud voice the bishop exclaimed, " God shall judge between thee and me, O Constantine ! I demand of thee to summon my enemies, and thyself to hear my cause." The emperor was overawed ; he granted the request, and summoned the accusers of the patriarch.

But these wicked men, alarmed lest after all their devices their prey should escape them, invented a new accusation, of a nature to touch Constantine nearly. They said that Athanasius prevented the usual supplies of corn from Alexandria from reaching the capital, in order to force the emperor into concession. This appeal to his pride was successful.

Forgetful of justice and truth, Constantine banished St. Athanasius to the distant city of Triers, or Treves, in the year 336.

CHAPTER IV.

Faint not, and fret not, for threatened woe,
Watchman on Truth's grey height !
Few tho' the faithful, and fierce tho' the foe,
Weakness is aye heaven's might.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

ARIUS IN CONSTANTINOPLE—HIS DEATH—DEATH OF CONSTANTINE—ATHANASIUS REINSTATED—AND AGAIN BANISHED—FLIES TO ROME—JULIUS—COUNCIL OF SARDICA—CONSTANTIUS SUES FOR RECONCILIATION AND RESTORES ATHANASIUS—NEW ACCUSATIONS—COUNCIL AT MILAN—FALL OF HOSIUS.

THE exiled patriarch met with a cordial reception from Maximinus, Bishop of Treves, and by some it has been supposed that here he put together the creed bearing his name. This, however, as has been before observed, is very doubtful. But we now turn to the history of the proceedings in the east during his exile. Countenanced by the emperor, the insolence and wickedness of Arius knew no bounds, and too many of the faithful shrunk from incurring the imperial displeasure by forcibly opposing him. At last the emperor fixed a certain day

on which he peremptorily commanded the venerable Alexander, Patriarch of Constantinople, to receive Arius, and administer to him the Holy Communion.

The heart of the aged prelate died within him, but he did not despair ; he knew One Mighty to save, Who, even at the last hour, could work out His own glory : and calling together all the true Catholics, he betook himself to earnest prayer in the principal church, and well we know how strong a weapon of defence this is !

In the agony of his spirit, this aged servant of God prayed that He would avert the impending calamity of the triumph of error, or that He would remove him out of the world.*

The Catholics were kneeling in fervent, solemn

* “ When the Bishop Alexander heard this, he was greatly distressed, and entering into the church, he stretched forth his hands unto God and bewailed himself ; and casting himself upon his face in the chancel, he prayed, lying upon the pavement. And he besought these two things, saying : ‘ If Arius is brought to communion to-morrow, let me Thy servant depart, and destroy not the pious with the impious, but if Thou wilt spare Thy Church (and I know that Thou wilt spare), look upon the words of the Eusebians, and give not Thine inheritance to destruction and reproach, and take off Arius, lest if he enter into the Church the heresy may seem also to enter with him, and henceforward impiety may be accounted for piety.’ ”—*Epistle from Athanasius to Serapion.*—*St. Athanasius. Historical Tracts, Oxford Trans.*

prayer—their bodies fasting, and their souls raised in intense supplication. Meanwhile, the Arians abandoned themselves to feasting, which they left only to form a kind of triumphal procession, bearing Arius aloft, as though he had already conquered the truth. But his day of reckoning was at hand. Even while thus carried, a faintness and sickness came over the wretched man, he hastily retreated into a neighbouring house ; his friends waited his return, but he came not. Even at the last moment—when his ungodly triumph seemed all but attained—those awful words sounded—“ This night is thy soul required of thee”; and the wretched man died—a signal proof how God suffers not the truth to be overwhelmed.

A solemn service was immediately offered by the patriarch and the Catholics, not in thanksgiving for the fearful death of Arius, for we are very sure that the servants of Him Who, even on His cross, prayed for His enemies, would feel no joy at the “ death of a sinner,” but in gratitude for the deliverance of the Catholic Church from her great peril. God hath indeed “ made His wonderful works to be remembered.”*

On this event, a modern author writes thus :
“ Under the circumstances, a thoughtful mind cannot but account this as one of those remarkable in-

* Psalm iii. 4.

terpositions of power, by which Divine Providence urges on the consciences, in the natural course of things, what their reason from the first acknowledges, that He is not indifferent to human conduct. We do not in such cases necessarily pass any general sentence upon the individual, who appears to be the object of Divine visitation, but merely upon the particular act which provoked it, and which has its fearful character of evil stamped upon it, independent of the punishment which draws our attention towards it. The man of God who prophesied against the altar of Bethel, is not to be regarded by the light of his last act, but according to the general tenor of his life. Arius, also, must thus be viewed ; though, unhappily, his closing deed is but the seal of a prevaricating and presumptuous career.”*

The emperor did not allow any alteration in his sentiments respecting Athanasius to appear, in consequence of this awful and striking event. But on his deathbed (when he received the sacrament of Baptism), he repented of his injustice towards the great prelate, and expressed his belief in his innocence.†

* “Arians of the fourth century.”

† His son believed, or pretended to believe, that Constantine had banished St. Athanasius in order to preserve him from his foes, as we learn from a letter dated Treves, 15th before Calends of July (June 17, 338), in which he says: “Athana-

In the year 337, Constantine expired. He was succeeded by his sons, Constantine, Constans and Constantius. The death of Constantine, in A.D. 337, reduced them to two. Constans, a weak, voluptuous man, did indeed espouse the orthodox cause, but his power was limited to the west ; Constantius, of no higher character, adhered to the heretical party, and to him the east was allotted. Councils were summoned on both sides ; and whilst at Rome, Alexandria, Sardica, Arles, and Milan, Athanasius was triumphantly acquitted, he was as positively condemned at Antioch, Philippopolis, and Rimini. An angry threat of war, on the part of the Emperor of the West, produced the restoration of St. Athanasius to his see. He re-entered his birth-place in the midst of a triumphal procession, and Egypt submitted gladly to his paternal rule. "Joy and

sius.....was sent away into Gaul for a time, with the intent that, as the savageness of his bloodthirsty and inveterate enemies persecuted him to the hazard of his sacred life, he might thus escape some irremediable calamity. In order to escape this, he was snatched out of the jaws of his assailants, and was ordered to pass some time under my government..... where he, relying entirely on divine assistance, set at naught the sufferings of adverse fortune.....It was the fixed intention of . . . my father to restore the bishop to his own place... but he was taken away by that fate which is common to all men, and went to his rest before he could accomplish his wish...."—*Hist. Tract* ii. 87.

cheerfulness prevailed, and the people ran together, hastening to obtain the desired sight of him. The churches were full of rejoicings, and thanksgivings were offered up to the Lord everywhere ; and all the ministers and clergy beheld him with such feelings that their souls were possessed with delight, and they esteemed that the happiest day of their lives.”*

But a new attack upon him was commenced before long, by a council held at Tyre, A.D. 341. It was followed by another at Antioch, where, by proceedings conducted with shameful craft and injustice, the Arian party pronounced sentence upon St. Athanasius, deposed him, and elected in his room Gregory, a native of Cappadocia. Great was the consternation of the Alexandrians, when suddenly they found their beloved and newly-restored pastor torn from them ; and a riot of the fiercest nature occurred, in which the party who installed Gregory respected neither station, age, nor sex, in their violence.

Athanasius, a second time an exile, took refuge at Rome, where his virtues were duly valued by the two greatest of the western prelates, Julius of Rome and Hosius of Cordova ; and so striking were his merits, and so imposing his character, that clergy and people unanimously paid him the most unshaken devotion, and adhered firmly to his precepts.

* Hist. Tract ii. 8.

It is probable that whilst at Rome his spiritual guidance was eagerly sought after. We are told that he was "mild in his reproofs, and instructive in his commendations, in both of which he observed such even measure, that his reproofs spoke the kindness of a father, and his commendation the authority of a master ; so that neither was his indulgence over tender, nor his severity austere, but the one savoured of gentleness and moderation, the other of prudence, and both showed true religion and philosophy."*

We can well imagine that the years he spent in Rome would be most soothing and grateful to him, thus beloved, and freed from the turmoils that agitated his residence in Alexandria ; we can conceive with what fervour his religious mind would love to dwell on the spots hallowed by the presence of the holy Apostles and martyrs ; and how earnestly he would realize their faith, and the Mercy and Power which had sustained them ; that Power which had preserved him through many trials and persecutions, and to which he must have looked in entire trustfulness and resignation as his support through those yet remaining to him.

Perhaps, when he gazed on the Colosseum so recently (comparatively speaking) wet with the blood of Christian martyrs, he may have thought that his troubled course was to be closed at last with

* Cave.

the crown of martyrdom, which joyfully, we may be sure, he would have advanced to receive. But this, as all other events, he doubtless left entirely in the hands of the great Master, in Whose cause he was willing to spend, and be spent.

Meanwhile the disorders in Alexandria, under the Arian prelate, were terrible ; we find him endeavouring to force the orthodox into communion with him by the most relentless persecutions ; indeed Gregory was worse than the hireling shepherd ; he seemed to be the wolf itself which “ scattereth the sheep.” Grieved to the heart at the sufferings of his people, Athanasius once more defied his enemies, and Bishop Julius summoned a synod to meet at Rome and judge his cause. But though both there and at Milan he was solemnly acquitted, little real good was gained, inasmuch as the eastern prelates rejected the authority of Rome, and chose to consider the Council of Tyre as decisive. At length, however, through the interference of the Emperor Constans, a general council was convened at Sardica, at which were assembled one hundred western bishops, and seventy-five from the east. Once more the aged and venerable Hosius presided. The Arians, finding themselves in a minority, left the council, and set up one in opposition at Philippopolis. But affairs were about to take a new turn. Under what influence we cannot now pretend to decide,

but suddenly Constantius became as eager for reconciliation with Athanasius, as he had ever been in opposing him. Three times did he write to him, beseeching in the most earnest and apparently sincere language, that he would resume his episcopal throne.

But the saint was no more dazzled by prosperity than he had been cast down by adversity ; and he delayed some time before he responded to the emperor's overtures.

At last (A.D. 349) the monarch and the prelate met in Antioch, when the former could not do enough to testify his respect and filial veneration for St. Athanasius. He commanded that all accusations against him should be effaced from the city registers, and wrote a letter to the Alexandrians in his favour, couched in the following respectful terms. It ran thus :—

“ Victor Constantius Maximus Augustus to the People of the Catholic Church, at Alexandria.—
“ Desiring as we do your welfare in all respects, and knowing that you have been for a long time deprived of episcopal superintendence, we have thought good to send back to you your bishop, Athanasius, a man known to all men for the uprightness that is in him, and for his personal deportment.

“ Receive him in a suitable manner ; and putting him forth as your succour, in your prayers to God,

endeavour to preserve continually that unanimity and peace, according to the order of the church, which is, at the same time, becoming to you, and most advantageous to us. . . . We exhort you to continue steadfastly in your accustomed prayers, and to make him your advocate and helper towards God.”*

Constantius likewise addressed a letter to “the Bishops and Presbyters of the Catholic Church,” wherein he says : “The most reverend Athanasius has not been deserted by the grace of God, but although, for a brief season, he was subjected to trials to which human nature is liable, he has obtained from the superintending Providence such an answer to his prayers as was meet, and is restored, by the will of the Most High, and by our sentence, at once to his country and to the Church, over which by Divine permission he presided.”†

St. Athanasius was at Aquileia when his affairs took this favourable turn, and he immediately repaired to Rome, to take leave of the church there. Bishop Julius addressed the following letter to the Alexandrian church : “I congratulate you, beloved brethren, that you now behold the fruit of your faith before your eyes ; for any one may see that such is indeed the case with respect to my brother and fellow bishop, Athanasius, whom for the inno-

* Hist. Tracts, ii. 55.

† Ibid. 54.

cency of his life, and by reason of your prayers, God hath restored to you again. Wherefore it is easy to perceive, that you have continually offered up to God pure prayers and full of love.

“Being mindful of the heavenly promises, and the conversation that leads to them, which you have learnt from the teaching of this my brother, you knew certainly, and were persuaded by the right faith that is in you, that he whom you always had as present in your most pious minds, would not be separated from you for ever. Wherefore, there is no need that I should use many words in writing to you, for your faith has already anticipated whatever I could say to you, and has by the grace of God procured the accomplishment of the common prayer of you all. Therefore, I congratulate you, because you have preserved your souls unconquered in the faith; and I also congratulate no less my brother Athanasius, in that, though he has endured many afflictions, he has at no time been forgetful of your love and earnest desires towards him. For although for a season he seemed to be withdrawn from you in body, yet has he continued to live as always present with you in spirit.*

“Wherefore, he returns to you now, more illustrious than when he went away from you. Fire

* The Oxford translator says: “Athanasius here omits a paragraph in his own praise.”

tries and purifies the precious metals, gold and silver: but how can one describe the worth of such a man, who, having passed victorious through the perils of so many tribulations, is now restored to you, being pronounced innocent, not by my voice only, but by the voice of the whole Council? Receive, therefore, dearly beloved brethren, with all godly honour and rejoicing, your bishop, Athanasius, together with those who have been partners with him in so many labours. And rejoice that you have now obtained the fulfilment of your prayers, after that, in your salutary writings, you have given meat and drink to your pastor, who, so to speak, longed and thirsted after your godliness. For, while he sojourned in a foreign land, you were his consolation; and you refreshed him, during his persecutions, by your most faithful minds and spirits. And it delights me now to conceive and figure to my mind the joy of every one of you at his return, and the pious greetings of the multitude, and the glorious festivity of those that run to meet him. What a day will that be to you, when my brother comes back again, and your former sufferings terminate, and his much-prized and desired return inspires you all with an exhilaration of perfect joy! The like joy it is mine to feel in a very great degree, since it has been granted me to make the acquaintance of so eminent a man.

It is fitting, therefore, that I should conclude

my letter with a prayer. May Almighty God, and His Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, afford you continual grace, giving you a reward for the admirable faith which you displayed in your noble confession in behalf of your bishop; that He may impart unto you, both here and hereafter, those better things, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man,—the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom to Almighty God be glory for ever and ever. Amen. I pray, dearly beloved, for your health and strength in the Lord.”*

As the restored exile passed on his homeward way, he says, that “the bishops of every place sent me on my way in peace”:† and the bishops of Palestine added their testimony in an epistle.

“The Holy Council assembled at Jerusalem, to the brethren in ministry in Egypt and Libya; and to the Presbyters, Deacons, and people at Alexandria, dearly beloved brethren, and greatly longed for, sends health in the Lord.

“We cannot give worthy thanks to the God of all, for the wonderful things which He has done at all times; and especially at this time, with respect to your Church, in restoring to you your pastor and lord, our fellow-minister Athanasius. Of a

* Tract ii. 52.

† Atha. Apol. iv. 5.

truth your prayers have been heard by the God of all, who cares for His Church, and has looked upon your tears and groans; and has therefore heard your petitions. For ye were as sheep, scattered and fainting, not having a shepherd. Wherefore, the true Shepherd, who careth for His own sheep, has visited you from heaven, and has restored to you him whom you desire. . . . Wherefore, receive him with uplifted hands; and take good heed that you offer up due thanksgivings on his behalf to God, Who has bestowed these blessings upon you; so that you may continually rejoice with God, and glorify our Lord, in Christ Jesus our Lord; through Whom, to the Father be glory for ever. Amen.”*

The subsequent conduct of Constantius gives us good reason to suppose, that it was not the triumph of truth and justice in his heart, but more probably a sense of expediency, and a wish to gain his brother, now that he was menaced by a war with Persia.

St. Athanasius, however, returned again to Alexandria, where, to use the language of one of his biographers, “the long time of his absence, and the many and great calamities he had suffered for the Faith enhanced the joy and triumph of his return. The bishops, clergy, and people from all parts flocked to meet him, at once glad to see their beloved patriarch returned, and to find themselves

* Tract ii. 57.

relieved from the yoke of those who had been cruelly tyrannising over their persons and consciences. Public feasts and entertainments were made throughout the city; and that God also might have His share of praise and honour, sacred solemnities were kept with more than ordinary devotion, people exhorting one another to a mighty zeal and constancy in religion. Alms and charity were distributed with a liberal hand, the hungry fed, the naked clothed, widows and orphans provided for; the great contention was who should express most forwardness in acts of piety and virtue; so that every family seemed turned into a little Church, and all was profound admirable peace.”*

How grateful must it have been to the heart of the holy man, to find his dear children thus remembering the lessons he had taught them, shewing practically their knowledge, that “if God so loved us, we ought to love one another”;† and giving vent to their joy and gladness, not in riotous living and mere worldly festivities, but by those actions of love and charity, which our gracious Lord has said He will count as done unto Himself. Would that in all our joys we thus shewed that we acknowledge the Giver—

“Nor in the stream the source forget.”‡

* Cave, Life of St. Athanasius.

† 1 John iv. 11.

‡ Keble.

This glance of sunshine was, however, but transitory. Constans died soon after the restoration of his friend, and on the eve of his battle with the usurper Maxentius, Valens, the Arian Bishop of Murse, took advantage of the agony of mind in which the weak Constantius was plunged, and having probably received early and private intelligence of the favourable result of the battle, persuaded the emperor that an angel had appeared to him from heaven, and announced that, in answer to his prayers, the usurper was defeated. Thus once more the Arian cause regained the ascendancy.

Paul, Bishop of Constantinople, was the first victim; but Athanasius, as the head of the orthodox party, was the great object of attack. In vain the emperor endeavoured to extort a sentence of condemnation from the Councils of Arles and Milan. The charges brought against Athanasius were, as usual, either trivial or unsupported. As an instance of the latter class, may be adduced the charge, that he had been engaged in a treasonable correspondence with Maxentius, the murderer of his friend and benefactor Constans; while among the former may be placed the accusation of his having used a new church, before the imperial license had been granted.*

* St. Athanasius addressed a beautiful letter to Constantius at this time, repudiating the calumnies of his foes. In it he

In the year 355, three hundred prelates met at Milan to take cognizance of three charges; Constantius was present. He interfered most unduly, even pretending that he was commissioned by Heaven itself to restore peace in the Church. Some of the Athanasian party were injudicious and ungoverned in their language. The emperor, who had descended to the meanness of listening from a hiding place to the debate, became exasperated by hearing himself spoken of in terms of contempt and indignation. He insisted on the condemnation of Athanasius, but he could only obtain it by the most violent measures. The signature of Liberius, the Roman pontiff, was extorted; and Hosius, by the most cruel tortures, scourging, and even the rack, was at last so weakened in mind and body, that he signed, not the condemnation of his saintly friend, but a formulary which virtually condemned

thus appeals to the King of kings. "O Lord Almighty and King of Eternity, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who by Thy word hast given this kingdom to Thy servant Constantius, do Thou shine into his heart, that he, knowing the falsehood that is set against me, may both favourably receive this my defence, and make known unto all men that his ears are firmly set to hearken unto the truth, according as it is written, 'Righteous lips alone are acceptable unto the king.' For Thou hast caused it to be said by Solomon, that thus the throne of a kingdom shall be established."—*Epis. Athan. to Constantius. Oxford Trans.*

the Nicene creed, thereby countenancing the Arian heresy.*

* In reply to the emperor's cajoleries and threats, Hosius wrote: "I was a confessor at the first, when a persecution arose in the time of your grandfather, Maximinian; and if you shall persecute me, I am ready now too to endure anything, rather than to shed innocent blood and to betray the truth. . . . Cease these proceedings, I pray you, and remember that you are a mortal man. Be afraid of the Day of judgment, and keep yourself pure thereunto. Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands unto us concerning them, but learn them from us. God hath put into your hands the kingdom; to us He hath intrusted the affairs of His Church; and as he who should steal the empire from you would resist the ordinance of God, so likewise fear, on your part, lest by taking upon yourself the government of the Church, you become guilty of a great offence. It is written, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' . . . I will not unite myself with the Arians; I anathematize their heresy." Of this letter Athanasius says: "Such were the sentiments of the Abraham-like old man, Hosius. But the emperor desisted not from his designs, nor ceased to seek an occasion against him, but continued to threaten him severely. . . . He detained Hosius a whole year in Sirmium, and used such violence towards the old man, that at last, broken by suffering, he was brought, though hardly, to hold communion with Valens and Ursacius, though he would not subscribe against Athanasius. Yet even thus he forgot not his duty; for at the approach of death, as it were by his last testament, he bore witness to the force which had been used towards him, and anathematized the Arian heresy, and gave strict charge that no one should receive it."—*Historical Tracts. Oxford Trans.*

Gladly would we have seen the venerable prelate firm to the last ; but let us not judge him harshly. For upwards of a century he had never swerved ; he had borne all things in defence of the truth ; and if at last, worn out in mind and body, he yielded under the pressure, surely we may attribute it solely to physical decay ; and throwing a respectful veil over the errors of Bishop Hosius, pass on to his death-bed, where, at the age of 103—two years after this persecution—he protested against the compulsion used towards him, and died abjuring the heresy, which dishonoured his Divine Lord and Saviour.*

* HOSIUS.—In speaking of this venerable prelate, “that man of an happy old age,” “the Abraham-like old man,” (*Hist. Tracts*), St. Athanasius says: “When was there a council held in which he did not take the lead, and convince every one by his orthodoxy? Where is there a Church which does not possess some glorious monument of his patronage? Who has ever come to him in sorrow, and has not gone away rejoicing? What needy person ever asked his aid, and did not obtain what he desired?”—*Apol. for Flight*, § 5.

CHAPTER V.

In the dark night, 'mid the saints' trial sore,
 He stood, and bowed before
 The holy mysteries,—he their meetest sign—
 Weak vessel, yet divine.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

ATHANASIUS IN ALEXANDRIA—DRIVEN FROM HIS CHURCH—
 FLIES TO THE WILDERNESS—GEORGE OF CAPPADOCIA—
 ATHANASIUS—HOW EMPLOYED—JULIAN THE APOSTATE—
 ATHANASIUS RESTORED AND DEPOSED FOR A SHORT TIME
 —FIFTH EXILE—PEACEFUL RETURN.

MEANWHILE, St. Athanasius calmly pursued his work; “while he punished he spared, and restored in the spirit of meekness, while he rebuked and rejected with power.”*

One night, it was a vigil, and the bishop and the more earnest of his congregation were preparing for the Eucharistic services of the morrow, in the church of St. Theonas: their midnight orisons were disturbed by the wild notes of trumpets, and the approaching tramp of horses, and suddenly the doors

* Arians of the fourth century.

were burst open, and the church was filled with armed men. They paused a moment, perhaps in awe, beholding the solemn house of God, which would be yet more impressive from its darkness ;— the only lights in the choir shedding their dim rays upon the stately archbishop and his kneeling flock. But the warlike din increased, and the prelate commanded the choir to entone the glorious psalm—

“ Oh ! give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever.

“ Who remembered us when we were in trouble, for His mercy endureth for ever.

“ And hath delivered us from our enemies, for His mercy endureth for ever.”

The almost angelic notes rose high above the tumult and clash of the soldiers. The account of what followed we give in Athanasius' own words. “ The general and his soldiers blocking up the chancel, with a view of arresting me, the clergy and some of my people began in their turn clamorously to urge me to withdraw myself. However, I refused to do so, before one and all in the church were gone. Accordingly I stood up and directed the parting prayer to be said ; and then I urged them all to depart first, for that it was better I should run the risk than any of them suffer. But by the time that most of them were gone out, and the rest following, the religious brethren, and some

of the clergy, who were immediately about me, ran up the steps and dragged me down. And so, be truth my witness, though the soldiers blockaded the chancel, and were in motion round about the church, the Lord leading, I made my way through them, and, by His protection, got away unperceived, glorifying God mightily that I had been enabled to stand by my people, and even to send them out before me, and yet had escaped in safety from the hands of those who sought me.”* The church was pillaged, and the most sacred treasures of the altar polluted.

It was after this event that St. Athanasius wrote an elaborate defence of flight, in which he says :—

“If they reproach men for hiding themselves from those who seek to destroy them, and accuse those who flee from their persecutors, what will they do when they see Jacob fleeing from his brother Esau, and Moses withdrawing into Midian for fear of Pharaoh? What excuse will they make for David, for fleeing from his house on account of Saul, and for hiding himself in the cave? What will they say when they see the great Elias, after calling upon God, and raising the dead, hiding himself for fear of Ahab, and fleeing from the threats of Jezebel?

“ Have they no recollection of what is

* Athan. Apol.

written in the Gospel ? For the disciples also withdrew and hid themselves for fear of the Jews ; and Paul, when he was sought after by the governor at Damascus, was let down from the wall in a basket, and so escaped his hands. The Scripture then relates these things of the saints—and to accuse them of acting contrary to the will of God would be to show themselves entirely ignorant of the Scriptures. For there was a command under the law that cities of refuge should be appointed, in order that they who were sought after to be put to death, might at least have some means of saving themselves. And when He Who spake unto Moses, the Word of the Father, appeared, He also gave this commandment, saying—‘ But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another ;’* and, shortly after, He says, ‘ When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains, &c.’† Knowing these things, the saints regulated their conduct accordingly. . . . and this is the rule which is given unto men to lead them to perfection—what God commands, that to do.

“ Wherefore also the Word Himself, being made man for our sakes, condescended to hide Himself,

* Matt. x. 23.

† Matt. xxiv. 15-16.

when He was sought after, as we do ; and also when He was persecuted, to flee and avoid the designs of His enemies. For it became Him, as by hunger, and thirst, and suffering, so by hiding Himself and fleeing, to show that He had taken our flesh and was made man. Thus, at the very first—when He was a little child, He Himself, by His angel, commanded Joseph, ‘Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young child’s life.’* And when Herod was dead, we find Him withdrawing to Nazareth, for fear of Archelaus, his son. And when afterwards, He was showing Himself to be God, and made whole the withered hand, the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him ; but when Jesus knew it He withdrew Himself from thence. So when He raised Lazarus from the dead ; † ‘from that day forth they took counsel for to put Him to death ; Jesus, therefore, walked no more openly among the Jews.’ ‡ Also when John was martyred, and his disciples buried his body ; ‘when Jesus heard of it He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart.’ §

“Thus the Lord acted, and thus He taught—and we ought to assign the same cause for the conduct of all the saints. John has written thus—

* Matt. ii. 13.

† Matt. xii. 14, 15.

‡ John xi. 53, 54.

§ Matt. xiv. 13.

‘ They sought to take Him : but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come.’* And before it came, He Himself said to His mother, ‘ Mine hour is not yet come.’† And, again, when His time was come, He said unto His disciples— ‘ Sleep on now, and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand.’‡

“ Now, in so far as He was God, and the Word of the Father, He had no time, for He is Himself the Creator of times. But being made man, He shows, by speaking in this manner, that there is a time allotted to every man ; and that not by chance, as some of the Gentiles imagine in their fables, but a time which He, the Creator, has appointed to every one, according to the Will of the Father. This is written in the Scriptures, and is manifest to all men. For although it be hidden and unknown to all what period of time is allotted to each, and how it is allotted, yet every one knows this, that as there is a time for spring, and for summer, and for autumn, and for winter, so there is a time to die, and a time to live.§ And God promises to them that serve Him truly, ‘ I will fulfil the number of thy days.’|| So Abraham dies full of days ; and David besought God, saying—‘ Take me not away in the midst of my days.’¶ . . .

* John vii. 30.

§ Eccles. iii.

† John ii. 4.

|| Gen. xxv. 8.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 45.

¶ Psalm cii. 24.

“ Now, as these things are written in the Scriptures, the case is clear, that the saints knew that a certain time was allotted to every man ; but that no one knows the end of that time, is clearly intimated by the words of David, ‘ Lord, let me know my end, and the number of my days.’* What he did not know he desired to be informed of. The rich man also, while he thought that he had yet a long time to live, heard the words, ‘ Thou fool ! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.’† And the preacher speaketh confidently in the Holy Spirit and says,—‘ Man also knoweth not his time.’‡ Wherefore the patriarch Isaac said to his son Esau : ‘ Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death.’§ Our Lord, therefore, although as God, and the word of the Father, He both knew the period which He had allotted to all, and was conscious of the time for suffering which He Himself had appointed also to His own body, yet, since He was made man for our sakes, He hid Himself when He was sought after before that time came, as we do. When He was persecuted, He fled ; and avoiding the designs of His enemies, He passed by, and so went through the midst of them. But when He had brought on the time which He Himself had appointed, at which He desired to suffer in the body

* Ps. xxxix. 5. Prayer-book version.

† Eccles. ix. 12.

‡ Luke xii. 20.

§ Gen. xxvii. 2.

for all men, He announces it to the Father, saying, —‘The hour is come ; glorify Thy Son.’* And then He no longer hid Himself from those who sought Him, but stood willing to be taken by them ; for He said to them that came unto Him, ‘ Whom seek ye ?’ and when they answered Jesus of Nazareth, He said unto them, ‘ I am He.’† He neither suffered Himself to be taken before the time came, nor did He hide Himself when it was come, but gave Himself up to them that conspired against Him, that He might show to all men that the life and death of man depends upon the Divine sentence.

“ The saints having received this example from their Saviour . . . acted lawfully in flying and hiding themselves when they were sought after. . . . It was certainly not through cowardice that they fled. God forbid. The flight to which they submitted was rather a conflict and war against death. . . . For he that dies ceases to suffer ; but he that flies, while he expects daily the assaults of his enemies, esteems death a lighter evil. They, therefore, whose course was consummated in their flight, did not perish dishonourably, but obtained as well as others the glory of martyrdom. Therefore it is, that Job is accounted a man of mighty fortitude, because he endured to live under so many

* John xvii. 1.

† John xviii. 4, 5.

and such severe sufferings, of which he would have had no perception, had he come to his end. Wherefore the blessed Fathers thus regulated their conduct also ; they showed no cowardice in fleeing from the persecutor, but rather manifested their fortitude of soul in shutting themselves up in close and dark places, and living a hard life. Yet they did not desire to avoid the time of death when it arrived ; for their concern was neither to shrink from it when it came, nor to forestall the sentence determined by Providence, nor to resist His dispensation, for which they knew themselves to be preserved ; lest by acting hastily they should become to themselves the cause of terror ; for thus it is written, " He that is hasty with his lips shall bring terror upon himself. " *

St. Athanasius proceeds to instance the readiness of all the Scripture saints for death, when their hour was indeed come ; and goes on to say — " They were blessed through that declaration of our Lord, ' Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. ' Nor yet were these their sufferings without profit to themselves ; for, having tried them as gold in the furnace, God found them worthy

* Prov. xiii. 3, Sept. In our version it stands, " He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life ; but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction. "

for Himself.* And then they shone the more, like sparks, being saved from them that persecuted them, and delivered from the designs of their enemies. . . And so they became dear in the sight of God, and obtained the most glorious testimony to their fortitude. . . . We, then, should not rashly tempt the Lord; but should wait until the appointed time of death arrive, or the Judge determine something concerning us, according as it shall seem to Him to be good: that we should be ready, that, when the time calls for us, or when we are taken, we may contend for the truth, even unto death.”†

Athanasius retired into the wilderness, where God had provided for him a secure shelter; here he was surrounded by the pious monks, to whom his word was law, and who prized his instructions beyond measure. But while the father was thus secure in his retirement, sad indeed was the change for the unhappy Alexandrians. The successor to their paternal and much-beloved chief-pastor was George of Cappadocia, a man of low birth, who, from leading a vagabond life, had been ordained by an Arian bishop, and, to use the words of a modern historian, “made a priest before he was a Christian.”‡

St. Athanasius says that he is “reported to have

* Wisdom iii. 5, 6.

† St. Athan. Apology for his flight. Oxf. Tran. v.

‡ Milman.

a hangman's temper."* And elsewhere he says : " The man whom the people desire, and know to be blameless, the emperor takes away and banishes ; but him whom they neither desire nor know, he sends to them from a distant place, with soldiers and letters from himself. And henceforward a strong necessity is laid upon them, either to hate him whom they love, who has been their teacher, and their father in godliness, and to love him whom they do not desire, and to trust their children to one of whose life and conversation and character they are ignorant ; or else certainly to suffer punishment, if they disobey the emperor." †

Every form of riot and license was now permitted in Alexandria : houses were plundered, monasteries burned, tombs broken open. Athanasius was sought for everywhere ; and the most fearful tortures were inflicted on all suspected of knowing anything concerning his movements. The Pagans joined in these excesses ; perhaps with the secret hope that their religion would at last succeed to such divisions. The day was indeed gone by, when it could be said, " See how these Christians love one another."

George's tyranny seemed to increase. If Gregory's hand was armed with whips, truly his, like

* Encyclical Ep. Oxf. Trans. Tract iii. 14.

† Hist. of the Arians. Tr. viii. 2.

Rehoboam's, bore scorpions. Everywhere the orthodox bishops were driven from their sees. "The desert was constantly resounding with the hymns of these pious and venerable exiles, as they passed along, loaded with chains, to their remote and savage places of destination; many of them bearing the scars, and wounds, and mutilations, which had been inflicted on them by their barbarous persecutors, to enforce their compliance with the Arian doctrine."*

God's cause ever flourishes in persecution; and, accordingly, we read that "the holy men, shaking off the dust, and looking up to God, neither feared the threats of the emperor, nor betrayed their cause before his sword; but received their banishment as a service pertaining to their ministry. And, as they passed along, they preached the Gospel in every place and city, although they were in bonds; proclaiming the orthodox faith, and stigmatizing the Arian heresy."†

For six years the persecution of Athanasius lasted. It is probable that, during part of the time, he sometimes issued forth from his retreat, travelling, though necessarily with the greatest secrecy, in various regions, confirming and strengthening the faith of the orthodox. Many of his most powerful writings seem certainly to have issued from the

* Milman.

† Athan. Hist. Arians.

desert; and struck terror into the hearts of his foes, whilst they gave new hopes and encouragement to the faithful. His style of writing is clear and perspicuous, grave and chaste, eloquent and acute. A modern writer, not over favourable to his cause, regards it as "the perfection of polemical divinity";* and, "When thou meetest with any tract of Athanasius," says a more ardent admirer, "and hast no paper at hand to transcribe it, rather than fail, write it on thy coat."†

At length, the death of Constantius raised Julian the Apostate to the empire of the Roman world. No sooner was his successor known, than the Pagans in Alexandria rose; and George, its unworthy bishop, who had incurred their hatred, as well as that of his especial flock, fell a victim to the outbreak of their fury. A raging mob surrounded his dwelling, dragged forth George, and tore him limb from limb. When the tumult had subsided, Athanasius, availing himself of the general edict for the recall of all exiles, issued by the emperor, quietly resumed his post, and endeavoured to restore some sort of order.

So intense was the delight of the Christians at his return, and so great their triumph, that we are told it became a proverb to express any great pomp,

* Milman.

† Abbot Cosmas.

“that even Athanasius was not brought in with more solemnity and honour.”

Terrified by the Pagan excesses, even the Arians had taken shelter under his rule. But Julian knew and feared his character; and that emperor's wrath was especially excited, on learning that Athanasius had administered the sacrament of Baptism to some heathen women. The emperor expressed his astonishment that the primate should have dared to resume his see, and ordered him to return to his banishment; replying with contempt to an earnest appeal from the Alexandrians that their bishop might be left to them.

When the sentence was announced, his friends burst into passionate lamentations; but, consistently with all his former course, the primate replied, “Be of good cheer; let us give way a little; this is but a cloud, which will soon blow over”: and, taking a boat, he ascended the Nile towards Thebais. Scarcely had he departed, when Julian's officers came to the city to apprehend him; and, finding that their prey had escaped, followed him to the river. When they heard this, his companions sought to prevail on him to fly to his old refuge in the desert; but Athanasius declined steadily, saying “No, let us rather go and meet our executioner; that he may know that greater is He that is for us, than he that is against us.”

As the boat returned to Alexandria, it was met by the imperial officers, who stopped it to inquire of those who were in it, if they had seen the fugitive. They replied, Yes: that he was hard by. The officers passed on in pursuit, whilst Athanasius returned to Alexandria, and remained in concealment till the death of Julian (A.D. 362) once more enabled him to resume his station.*

* In speaking of religious persecution, St. Athanasius uses the following beautiful language: "It is not the part of men who have confidence in what they believe, to force and compel the unwilling. In this manner it is that the devil, when he has no truth on his side, attacks and breaks down the doors of them that admit him with axes and hammers. But our Saviour is so gentle, that He teaches thus: 'If any man *wills* to come after Me,' and 'whoever *wills* to be My disciple,' and coming to each He does not force them, but knocks at the door and says, 'Open unto Me, My sister, My spouse;' and if they open to Him, He enters in; but if they delay and will not, He departs from them. For the truth is not preached with swords and with darts, nor by means of soldiers, but by persuasion and counsel."—*Tract viii. Oxford Trans.*

CHAPTER VI.

Since he hath been in yonder tomb,
Full many a house hath caught the gloom.
Full many a widow's heart is cold,
And many, used his hand to hold,
Have missed the shepherd from the fold.

REV. J. WILLIAMS,

SHORT FLIGHT—PEACEFUL OCCUPATION—MEDITATES—HIS
DEATH—LOSS TO THE CHRISTIAN WORLD—HIS CHARACTER.

THE remaining days of St. Athanasius passed in comparative tranquillity. Once indeed, under the reign of Valens (A. D. 369), an imperial order expelled him from his see, and he took refuge in his father's sepulchre ; but the zeal of the people, who instantly flew to arms, intimidated the prefect, and procured his recall, and during the remainder of his life but little disturbance or disquiet occurred in Alexandria. He seemed the father of the Christian world—the mediator between all parties—seeking everywhere to establish unity and good feeling. At length, A. D. 373, at upwards of seventy-six years of age, this holy bishop was admitted to the

rest which he had never known on earth, and the scenes of discord and bloodshed which immediately ensued, when the control of that master-mind was felt no more, bespeak sufficiently both the arduousness of his task and the wisdom and prudence with which he fulfilled it.

The old age of St. Athanasius was, as has been said, peaceful, and his own comment on the seventieth Psalm has been applied to himself. "God has promised," he says, "to be a wall of fire round about to those that believe in Him. The apostolic company knows this, and calls on Him to fulfil this promise to its members. Thou art my song always! By Thy providence I became famous. I was as a marvel unto many: yet not by mine own power had I so high a privilege. For Thou wert He who gave me courage and zeal through Thine own aid. I have not been unmindful of what I was taught, but as I learned so I told to others. Now that I am old and grey-headed forsake me not, until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power, whereby the strong man was bound and his goods spoiled. These will I shew forth; not Thy earthly blessings only, but those heavenly blessings too, which Thou hast purchased with Thine own blood."

It was not likely that the death of one so closely occupied in the controversies of the age should pass

unnoticed. Truly it has been said, that in his removal, "the Church sustained a loss from which it never recovered. His resolute resistance of heresy had been but one portion of his services; a more excellent praise is due to him for his charitable skill in binding together his brethren in unity. The discussions between his own Church and Constantinople, which ensued upon his death, shew how much the combination of the Catholics depended upon his silent authority. His personal influence remained unimpaired to the last."

We may close this brief notice of one, who, after the Apostles, has been a principal instrument through whom the sacred truths of Christianity have been secured to the world, by two passages extracted from the writings of his cotemporaries, which may shew us their opinion of him. The first is a letter written by St. Basil of Cæsarea.

"To Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.—The more the sicknesses of the Church increase, so much the more earnestly do we all turn towards thy fulness of grace, persuaded that thy guardianship is our sole remaining comfort in our difficulties. By the power of thy prayers, by the wisdom of thy counsels, thou art able to carry us through this fearful storm, as all are sure, who have made trial of thy gifts ever so little. Wherefore cease not, both to pray for our souls, and to stir us up by thy

letters ; didst thou know the profit of these to us, thou wouldst never let pass an opportunity of writing to us. For me, were it vouchsafed to me, by the help of thy prayers, once to see thee, and to profit by the gifts lodged in thee, and to add to the history of my life a meeting with so great and apostolical a soul, surely I should consider myself to have received from the loving mercy of God, a compensation for all the ills with which my life has ever been afflicted."

Our second quotation is from St. Gregory Nazianzen, who thus writes of him :—" He was as humble in his mind as he was sublime in his life ; a man of an inimitable virtue, and yet withal so courteous that any might freely address him ; meek, gentle, compassionate, amiable in his discourse, but much more so in his life ; of an angelic temper and disposition. . . . He was one that so governed himself that his life supplied the place of sermons, and his sermons prevented his corrections, much less need he to cut or lance where he did but once shake his rod. In him all ranks and orders might find something to admire, something particular for imitation ; one might commend his unwearied constancy in fastings and prayers ; another his vigorous and incessant perseverance in watchings and praises ; a third, his admirable care and protection of the poor ; a fourth, his resolute opposition to the proud, or his conde-

scension to the humble. He was a patron to the widow, a father to the orphan, a friend to the poor, a harbour to strangers, a brother to the brethren, a physician to the sick, a keeper of the healthful, one who became all things to all men, that if not all he might at least gain the more. With respect to his predecessors in his see, of some he imitated their discourses, of others their actions, the meekness of some, the zeal of others, the patience and constancy of the rest, borrowing their perfections, and so making up a complete representation of virtue, like skilful limners, who, to make the piece absolute, do from sundry persons draw the several perfections within the idea of their own mind ; so he, insomuch that in practice he outdid the eloquent, and in his discourses outwent those who were most versed in practice. He was a man of real and unfeigned piety, of an impregnable courage which no dangers or troubles could daunt ; of a most active and unconquerable zeal for the Catholic faith, in the defence whereof he held up the buckler when the united strength of almost the whole world pressed upon him, and which never flagged under so many years' potent opposition, so many hardships heaped upon him. He overcame everything by a mighty patience, and recommended his cause by the meekness of his sufferings. He was an adamant to his persecutors, and a loadstone to dissenters—the one

found him incapable of impressions,—no more apt to yield than a rock of marble; the others, by a singular meekness and a generous patience, he drew over to himself, or where not that, he drew them at least to a secret reverence and veneration of him.”

And now we must take farewell of the saint, whose voyage through the waves of this troublesome world we have thus imperfectly traced.

The impression which we could wish his history to leave on us may be summed up in the beautiful prayer taught us by our Holy Mother Church:—

O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one Communion and Fellowship in the mystical Body of Thy Son, Christ, our Lord; grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



ST. BASIL THE GREAT.

Beautiful flowers round Wisdom's secret well,
Deep holy thoughts of penitential lore,
And dressed with images from Nature's store,
Handmaid of Piety! Like thine own cell,
By Pontic mountain wilds and shaggy fell,
Great Basil! there within thy lonely door,
Watching, and Fast, and Prayer, and Penance dwell,
And sternly nursed affections heavenward soar.
Without are setting suns and summer skies,
Ravine, rock, wood, and fountain melodies ;
And Earth and Heaven, holding communion sweet,
Teem with wild beauty. Such thy calm retreat,
Blest saint ! and of thyself an emblem meet,
All fair without, within all stern and wise.

THE CATHEDRAL.

LIFE OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

I have no hopes but one,
Which is of heavenly reign—
All lesser hopes refrain.

R. SOUTHWELL, 1616.

**BASIL'S PARENTAGE—HIS SISTER AND BROTHERS—HIS EARLY
EDUCATION—HE GOES TO ATHENS—HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH
GREGORY NAZIANZEN—THEIR CONDUCT AND HABITS—
BASIL RESOLVES TO FORSAKE THE WORLD—HE VISITS
PALESTINE—IS ORDAINED—AND RETURNS TO HIS MONASTIC
SOLITUDE—DESCRIPTION OF HIS ABODE AND OCCUPATIONS
—HIS ILL HEALTH—BREACH WITH EUSEBIUS.**

THERE is no one amongst the Fathers of the Church whose history is more deserving of our attention, and at the same time more deeply interesting, than that of Basil the Great ; whether we consider his profound learning, both theological and secular, and his powerful eloquence ; or whether we examine into the forbearing meekness which made him beloved of

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all ; or the earnest humility and self-denial which was equally conspicuous in the bishop as in the monk ; or the indefatigable energy and courage with which he maintained the cause of truth ; opposing heresy with equal decision and vigour in the person of a monarch or his subject—of friend or foe.

The tenderness of St. Basil's friendship wins our love, and our sympathies are excited by his sorely tried and often painful career, and his early death. "He met little but disappointment, and quitted life early in pain and sorrow."

We may almost say that Basil received the right of painfully bearing the cross as an inheritance ; for his paternal ancestors had been sufferers in the Maximinian persecution early in the fourth century, and had fled to the wilds of the Pontine hills, where they had dragged out a painful existence for some time. Amongst these confessors of the faith, was Macrina, the mother of St. Basil's father, a most exemplary woman. His son, the elder Basil, considered this as the most honourable ancestry that his children could claim, although he was likewise the descendant of an ancient race, which had borne many honours in city and camp. This elder Basil, whose patrimonial inheritance must have suffered from his parent's flight, was professor of rhetoric in Neo-Cæsarea, where he married a lady, named Emmelia, of no slight reputation for her exceeding

beauty, which seems to have been equalled by her excellence and piety. This union was blessed with ten children—four of whom are considered as worthy to be remembered among the saints.

The eldest child was a daughter, named *Macrina* after her grandmother, of whom she was a worthy descendant. While yet a child, *Macrina* manifested a strong religious feeling ; delighting in works of piety. Before she was twelve years old, she knew the *Psalter* by heart. She inherited much of her mother's beauty, and her marriage was arranged, and all but concluded, when the intended bridegroom suddenly died. From this time *Macrina* resolved to lead a single life, and devoted herself to her family, assisting her mother in the education of her numerous brothers and sisters.

St. Basil was the second child ; the third, *Naucratius*, was a young man of singular promise, and had already gained considerable reputation for his oratorical powers ; when, at the age of twenty-two, he abandoned the intoxicating career of ambition, and retired into the forests of *Pontus*, where he died after a few years.

St. Gregory of Nyssa was another member of this family, so fruitful in holiness ; and a fourth is found in *St. Peter of Sebaste*, who being the youngest of the family, was the especial care of *Macrina* ; she was to him as a mother, tutor, and guardian.

We know little of Peter's subsequent life, except that, when Bishop of Sebaste, he was renowned for his hospitality and charity, and that during a severe famine multitudes fled to him, relying on his paternal care.

It was in the year 329, that Basil was born into this world, in the town of Neo-Cæsarea : and from his infancy he was dedicated to God ; for lying at the point of death, his life was granted to the faithful prayers of Basil and Emmelia. From the tenderest age, lessons of piety were carefully bestowed upon him—the effects of which were permanent—for Basil says in one of his letters, “ The idea of God which I had from my blessed mother, and from her mother Macrina, has ever grown within me.” Much of his childhood seems to have been spent under the roof of his grandmother, who had been herself a pupil of Gregory Thaumaturgus, and was well able to lay a good foundation for the future learning of her grandson. The elder Basil himself educated his son until the year 340, when he entered the schools successively of Cæsarea and Constantinople, under Libanius, the teacher of rhetoric. He made much progress, and soon received high praise, both for his great talents, especially in oratory, and for the gravity and steadiness of his manners.

But nothing short of the fountain head of literature could satisfy Basil, and, A.D. 351, he proceeded

to Athens, where his reputation had travelled before him, so that all the masters were ambitious of securing him as a pupil; and so great a respect was felt for him by the students, that Basil escaped the persecuting ordeal usually inflicted on new comers.

Basil had been already acquainted with Gregory of Nazianzen, son to the bishop of that place, and now that they found themselves established in Athens, in pursuit of the same object, they contracted the warmest friendship; the subsequent rupture of which, was one of the bitterest drops in St. Basil's cup of sorrows.

As it was, the similarity of their tastes and inclinations, and the tone of their religion altogether being of a much higher standard than that which generally prevailed among their fellow students, bound the two friends closely together—they lived in the same house, shared the same table, and were seldom or never seen apart.

"There is often much jealousy between men of science," says Gregory; "but though we pursued the same mistress, none ever existed between us. Emulation stirred us both to study, yet we rather strove which should concede, than which should hold the palm. Each esteemed the other's success as his own; and our two bodies seemed animated both by one soul. . . Our one great aim was virtue, and we sought to live worthily of our hopes for the

life to come. We strove to loosen our hold of this world, before we were called upon to quit it, and to this we turned all our energies. God's Word was our guide—and we urged one another forward, being as it were a mirror the one to the other. We had no intercourse with the profligate and bold students, shunning such, as well as turbulent and headstrong, and associating only with such, as from their habits were desirable friends. For we well knew that it is easier to imbibe bad habits, than to impart good ones ; we often catch the diseases of others, but rarely give them our health. In our studies we preferred the useful to the merely agreeable, knowing how much depended on the influence now formed within us by what we read.

“ We frequented but two streets ; the one which we held dearest was that leading to church, the other, to the schools ; and we left to others those which conducted to the theatre, to festivities, and similar diversions ; for of what avail are all such pursuits as do not aid a man to regulate his life, nor to improve his character ? Our one aim and object was to be called, and indeed to be, Christians.”*

Accordingly, neither Basil nor Gregory seem to have been polluted by the sensuality and profligacy

* Tillemont, *Vie de St. Basile*.

with which they were surrounded—and they did not fall into the snare laid for them by their own talents and reputation, which placed them in a situation, trying, to say the least, to their humility. Basil did not find contentment in his position, agreeable and flattering as it seemed—he was made for higher and more spiritual things,

“The dark world, and fall’n humanity,
Hung like a weight upon the soul; then woke
Stirrings of deep divinity within,
And like the flickerings of a smouldering flame,
Yearnings of an hereafter.”*

and he was even now yearning after a life of self-renunciation and holiness.

His friend Gregory thus speaks of him:—“According to the way of human nature, when on arriving at what we hoped to be, great, we find it beneath its fame; Basil experienced some such feeling, began to be sad, grew impatient, and could not congratulate himself on his place of residence. He sought an object which hope had drawn; and he called Athens ‘hollow blessedness.’ I removed part of his sorrow—meeting it with reason, and soothing it with reflections. . . . I reassured him, and by continual trials of each other, I bound myself to him.”† Gregory’s admiration of his friend he thus

* The Mountain Home.

† Greg. Orat.

expresses. "Solomon gives wisdom to grey hairs—but what old man ever surpassed Basil in prudence? Who ever attracted more respect from young and old alike? Who ever united so great a learning with so admirable a life? He excelled in all the various branches of literature as most men are wont to excel in one only, mastering each as though he had applied to that alone. His assiduous application, and his vast penetration, seemed either alone sufficient, but he joined the two wonderfully. What animated and fiery eloquence—what minute and accurate knowledge of grammar—what depth of philosophy, both in speculation and practice, in demonstration and in logical definition! He only studied astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry, enough not to feel embarrassed in the society of those who cultivated them. As to all else which did not advance the cause of religion, he despised it. . . . His feeble health, and the consequent necessity of medicinal aid, caused him to become acquainted with the principles of healing, and he went deeply into the study of that science. But what was all Basil's learning, when compared to the holiness of his life? Young as he was, his deportment had the calm gravity of age; and though, like Moses, he was so richly endowed with human knowledge, yet from his infancy to the close of his life, sacred study was his delight, and it grew with him. In the midst of his literary

engrossments, he clung steadfastly to this—thereby fortifying and enriching his spirit: like a brave soldier, who fights with both hands, he employed his secular knowledge for the better instruction of the worldly, and for combating his adversaries.”*

Among Basil’s fellow students at Athens, we find Julian, afterwards distinguished as the Apostate. There was but little kindred spirit between them.

Meanwhile, Basil had come to the fixed determination of abandoning the world and its pursuits, and of consecrating his life and talents to the service of God.

Gregory shared every thought as it rose in Basil’s mind, and the two young friends despising the brilliant and alluring prospects which the world opened to them, prepared to quit Athens, and having received the rite of Baptism, to retire into the shade of a monastic life.

So much were they beloved in Athens, that when their intention was made known, they were assailed on all sides by both young and old, masters and pupils, who endeavoured by arguments, persuasion, and even violence, to deter them from accomplishing it. Gregory, whose character was strongly marked by a soft tenderness, was not proof against these solicitations ; he deferred his departure for a while ;

* Tillemont, Vie de St. Basile.

but the sterner, more vigorous Basil could not be induced to alter the course he had laid down for himself, and amidst the tears and regrets of his companions, he left Athens, A.D. 355 ; Gregory promising that as soon as his friend was settled in his retirement, he would join him.

Basil returned to his native city, where he was warmly pressed to take the superintendence of the schools ; and the flattering reception which he received seems to have aroused the passions of ambition and vain glory within his heart, but only as it were to terminate in defeat. Refusing to look behind him now that he had put his hand to the plough, Basil gave almost all his possessions to the Church, in behalf of the poor ; and stimulated by the pious admonitions of his sister Macrina, adopted the monk's habit, and fixed upon the spot of his retirement. This was in the neighbourhood of Neo-Cæsarea, and close to the house where his grandmother had lived, which was now become a place of monastic retirement, under the auspices of Macrina and her mother Emmelia, who having seen all her other children established in the world, had thankfully retreated to end her life in practices of devotion and charity. We will give Basil's own words speaking of this period of his life : " Having devoted my early life to the vain pursuit of worldly science and knowledge, I at last awoke as it were out of a

deep sleep, I perceived the force of real religion, and opened my eyes to the triviality and emptiness of the things which endure but for a moment, and I deplored the time wasted upon them. And earnestly desiring to lead a new life, and devote myself to God, I found in Holy Writ, that the only way to accomplish that end, is 'sell all and give to the poor,' and quitting the cares of this life, to be subject to no anxiety for perishing things."*

Basil now summoned his friend to fulfil his promise and join him ; but at the very outset of his career, a disappointment awaited him—Gregory had returned to Nazianzen, to his parents, who were both aged, and whom for the present he could not conscientiously leave. There is good reason to suppose that in addition to the comfort their son's presence would naturally be to the bishop and his wife, Gregory saw the necessity of some influence being maintained over his father's mind, in religious concerns ; for subsequently the old man was betrayed into signing the Ariminian Creed, to the exceeding distress of his son, who with considerable exertion, averted the consequences, and restored his father to the Catholic faith.

Under these circumstances, we can scarcely be surprised at Gregory's answer. "I have not stood

* Basil, Ep. 79.

to my word, I own it ; having protested, ever since Athens, and our friendship and union of heart there, that I would be your companion, and follow a strict life with you—yet I act against my wish, duty annulled by duty, the duty of friendship, by the duty of filial reverence.”*

Basil could not but acquiesce in his friend's resolve, yet he felt wounded and disappointed, and instead of settling in his retirement, he commenced a journey to Palestine and Egypt, and visited all the most eminent monastic establishments in Alexandria and Syria. In the year 358, Basil returned to Cæsarea, where he was ordained deacon by Dianæus, the bishop of that place, at whose hands he had also received holy baptism. At this period he writes :—“ Of all I once possessed, my gift of eloquence alone remains ; and this I offer, devote and consecrate, entirely to my God. The voice of His command, and the impulse of His Spirit, have made me abandon all things beside, to barter all I was owner of, for the precious store of the Gospel. Thus am I become, or rather I wish ardently to become, that happy merchant, who exchanges contemptible and perishable goods for others that are excellent and eternal. But being a minister of the Gospel, I devote myself solely to the duty of preaching, I embrace it as my lot, and will never forsake it.”†

* Greg. Ep. 5.

† Butler.

Basil remained but a short time in Cæsarea, for Dianæus, his bishop and friend, forsook the Catholic cause, and signed the formulary drawn up at the Council of Ariminum, thereby deserting St. Athanasius, and the true doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This was a most bitter sorrow to Basil, who loved Dianæus almost with a filial affection ; and though considering that from his subordinate situation with respect to the bishop, he was not called upon publicly to protest against him, still he withdrew from his presence and refused to hold any communication with him. The kindly feeling between them appears however to have been preserved, in spite of this strong trial, for when Dianæus lay on his deathbed, he summoned Basil, who hastened to him, and received his solemn recantation of his Arian errors, and protestation of his belief in the Nicene Creed.

Shortly after this, Basil determined to fulfil his former plans of leading a solitary life, and accordingly he returned to that spot in Pontus, on which he had fixed some time earlier.

Once more he invited Gregory to resume their habits of intimacy ; and the more to prevail on him, draws a pleasing description of his abode. “ God has opened to me a spot exactly answering to my taste. There is a lofty mountain, covered with thick woods, and watered towards the north with cool and transparent streams. A plain lies beneath, enriched

by the waters which are ever draining off upon it ; and skirted by a spontaneous profusion of trees, almost thick enough to be a fence ; so as even to surpass Calypso's Island, which Homer seems to have considered the most beautiful spot on earth. Indeed it is like an island, inclosed as it is on all sides ; for deep hollows cut off two sides of it ; the river which has lately fallen down a precipice, runs all along the front, and it is as impassable as a wall ; while the mountain extending itself behind, and meeting the hollows in a crescent, stops up the path at its roots. There is but one pass, and I am master of it. Behind my abode there is another gorge, rising into a ledge up above, so as to command the extent of the plain and the stream which bounds it, which is not less beautiful to my taste, than the Strymon, as seen from Amphipolis. For while the latter flows leisurely, and swells into a lake almost, and is too still to be a river, the former is the most rapid stream I know, and somewhat turbid too, from the rocks just above ; from which shooting down and eddying into a deep pool, it forms a most pleasant scene for myself, or any one else, and is an inexhaustible resource to the country people, in the countless fish which its depths contain. What need to tell of the exhalations from the earth, or the breezes from the river ? Another might admire the multitude of the flowers and singing birds ; but

leisure I have none for such thoughts. However the chief praise of the place is, that being happily disposed for produce of every kind, it nurtures what to me is the sweetest produce of all, quietness. Indeed it is not only rid of the bustle of the city, but is even unfrequented by travellers, except a chance hunter. It abounds indeed in game, as well as other things, not, I am glad to say, in bears or wolves, but in deer and wild goats, and hares and the like.”*

Gregory requested Basil not to stop at the description of externals, but to tell him how he passed his time, and what were his habits. The following is Basil’s reply :—

“I am really ashamed to tell you how I pass day and night in this lonely nook. Though I have left the city’s haunts, as the source of innumerable ills, yet have I not yet learned to leave myself. I am like a man, who, on account of sea-sickness, is angry with the size of his vessel as tossing over much, and leaves it for the pinnace or bark, and is sea-sick and miserable still, as carrying his delicacy of stomach along with him. So have I got no great good from this retirement. However what follows is an account of what I proposed to do, with a view of tracking the Footsteps of Him Who is our Guide unto salvation, and Who has said, ‘ If anyone will come after

* Trans. in Ch. of the Fathers.

Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'

"We must strive after a quiet mind. As well might the eye ascertain an object put before it, while it is wandering restless up and down, and sideways, without fixing a steady gaze upon it, as a mind distracted by a thousand worldly cares, be able clearly to apprehend the truth. . . . To such a one, each day, as it comes, darkens the soul in its own way; and, night after night, takes up the day's anxieties, and cheats the mind with illusions in accordance. Now one way of escaping all this is separation from the whole world; that is, not bodily separation, but the severance of the soul's sympathy with the body, and so to live without city, house, goods, society, possessions, means of life, business, engagements, or human learning, that the heart may readily receive every impress of Divine doctrine. Preparation of heart is the unlearning the prejudices of evil converse. It is the smoothing of the waxen tablet before attempting to write on it. Now solitude is of the greatest use for this purpose, inasmuch as it stills our passions, and gives room for principle to cut them out of the soul. Let there then be a place such as ours, separate from intercourse with men, that the tenor of our exercises be not interrupted from without. Pious exercises nourish the soul with divine thoughts. What state can be more

blessed than to imitate on earth the choruses of angels ? to begin the day with prayer, and honour our Maker with hymns and songs ? as the day brightens, to betake ourselves, with prayer attending on it throughout, to our labours, and to season our work with hymns, as with salt ? Soothing hymns compose the mind to a calm and cheerful state. Quiet then, as I have said, is the first step in our sanctification ; the tongue purified from the gossip of the world ; the eyes unexcited by fair colour or comely shape ; the ear not relaxing the tone of mind by voluptuous songs, nor by that special mischief, the talk of light men and jesters. Thus the mind, saved from dissipation from without, nor through the senses thrown upon the world, falls back upon itself, and thereby ascends to the contemplation of God.

“The study of inspired Scripture is the chief way of finding our duty ; for in It we find both instruction about conduct, and the lives of blessed men, delivered in writing, as breathing images of godly living, for the imitation of their good works. Hence in whatever respect each one feels himself deficient, devoting himself to this imitation, he finds, as from a dispensary, the due medicine for his ailment. From Job he learns endurance. Or is he inquiring how to be at once meek and great-hearted, hearty against sin, meek towards men, he will find David noble in

warlike exploits, meek and unruffled as regards revenge on enemies. Such too was Moses, rising up with great heart upon sinners against God, but with meek soul bearing their evil-speaking against himself.

“ This too is a very principal point to attend to— knowledge how to converse ; to interrogate without over-earnestness, to answer without desire of display ; not to interrupt a profitable speaker, or to desire ambitiously to put in a word of one’s own ; to be measured in speaking and hearing, not to be ashamed of receiving, or grudging in giving information, nor to pass another’s knowledge for one’s own. . . . One should reflect first what one is going to say, and then give it utterance ; be courteous when addressed, amiable in social intercourse ; not aiming to be pleasant by facetiousness, but cultivating gentleness in kind admonitions. Harshness is ever to be put aside, even in censuring.”

And in another letter Basil says :—

“ Our people rise while it is yet night, for the house of prayer ; and after confessing to God in distress and affliction, and continued tears, they rise up, and turn to psalm-singing. And now being divided into two, they respond to each other, thereby deepening their study of the holy oracles, and securing withal attention of heart without wandering. Next, one leading the chaunt, the rest follow him ; and thus with variety of psalmody spend the night,

with prayers interspersed. When day begins to dawn, all in common, as from one mouth and one heart, lift up to the Lord the psalm of confession, each making the words of repentance his own." *

From this letter it is evident that Basil had now under him a brotherhood of monks, in whose society he was in the habit of employing himself in manual labour, planting trees, cutting canals, hewing stones, and similar occupations ; nor did he neglect the work of an evangelist, frequently going into the country round about, to visit, teach, and exhort the peasants, amongst whom he was very successful, and led many to seek the eternal welfare of their souls.

Basil himself practised the greatest austerity, wearing by day the rough coarse habit of the brotherhood, and by night a hair-shirt—his only food being bread and herbs, and water to drink.

And these austerities must have been harder to him than to most, owing to his feeble health, a constant source of trial and mortification to him. He says himself that when he was called well, he was weaker than most sick people. Yet he seems to have persevered in a calm religious contentment, though it was no slight addition to his happiness when he was joined by Gregory, apparently for no long period of time.

* Ibid.

In the year 362 Dianæus died, and was succeeded by Eusebius, by whom Basil was ordained priest, a few months after his friend Gregory,—somewhat reluctantly indeed, but submitting to it as his duty. Basil then remained in the town, where, however, he led a similar life to that he had chosen in the desert ; nor did the calm simplicity of his character suffer from the busy multitude with which he was constrained to mingle.

But this residence in the city was of short duration. Eusebius, probably jealous of the influence Basil had over all his flock, quarrelled with him, and as there were many ready warmly to espouse the cause of the subordinate ecclesiastic, he hastened to prevent division and excitement by returning to his beloved retreat in Pontus. This was in the year 363.

CHAPTER II.

One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists—one only: an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.

WORDSWORTH.

BASIL IS RECALLED BY EUSEBIUS—OFFICIATES AS PRIEST AT CÆSAREA—SUCCEEDS EUSEBIUS AS BISHOP—HIS CONDUCT AS SUCH—DESCRIPTION OF ST. BASIL—HIS LETTER TO HIS UNCLE—VALENS PERSECUTES THE ORTHODOX—BASIL AND MODESTUS—BASIL AND VALENS—DEATH OF THE PRINCE GALATUS—DISPUTE WITH ANTHIMUS—BASIL APPOINTS GREGORY TO SASIMA—THEIR DISAGREEMENT—AND SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATION.

DURING the three years that Basil spent in peaceful devotion at his monastery, the Church was struggling with persecution. The hopes entertained by the Catholics on the accession of the Emperor Jovian were frustrated by his death, and the reign of the Arian Valens brought trouble of all kinds upon the faithful.

Under these circumstances it grieved Gregory to the heart that the Church should be deprived of so able and bold a defender as he knew Basil to be, and he set himself vigorously to work, to effect a reconciliation between Basil and his bishop, writing to the former that if he wished not to see the Church trampled under foot by heretics, he should arouse himself, and come forward ; whilst to the bishop he wrote an earnest commendation of his friend's piety and ability, entreating him to put aside all enmity, and recall one who in the present emergency would be so invaluable.

The bishop received Gregory's petition kindly, and commissioned him to negotiate with Basil, and prevail on him to return to Cæsarea, which was no difficult undertaking ; for Basil was cut to the heart at the miserable condition of the Church, and was ready and willing to devote all his energies to her welfare.

Accordingly he resumed his functions as priest, and soon by his vigorous and yet soothing measures restored the Church in Cæsarea to a respectable condition ; her disorders and disputes having before been most scandalous. It speaks highly for both himself and Eusebius, that the most perfect unanimity continued between them ; as long as the latter lived "Basil was to the bishop an impartial monitor, a faithful counsellor, a diligent coadjutor, a dex-

terous manager of business ; he was, in short, the staff of his age, the support of his faith, and the guide of his family.” *

Among the people Basil was greatly beloved for his mildness, and his fatherly solicitude both for their souls and bodies. The occasion for all his activity and wisdom presented itself, when in 367 a dreadful famine afflicted Cappadocia, under which the Cæsareans suffered fearfully. Basil induced the wealthy, and those whose prudence had laid up stores, to give him the general administration of them, which he conducted with such ability and method, as to keep off the heavy distress which had been justly apprehended. And by his personal superintendence, and his constant presence amongst the poor, he found many opportunities for feeding them likewise with that food which is Life eternal.

It is not to be wondered at, that upon the death of Eusebius, which occurred A.D. 370, there was a very general wish to elect Basil to the vacant episcopal throne. He, however, was far from anxious for this elevation, partly from his increasing infirmities. These indeed were such, that a little before Eusebius' death, Basil wrote, “Disease is my natural state. . . . It is the scourge of the Lord which goes on increasing my pains according to my

* Cave.

deserts ; therefore I have received illness upon illness, so that now even a child may see that this shell of mine must for certain fail, unless perchance God's Mercy, vouchsafing to me in His long suffering time for repentance, now, as often before, extricate me from evils beyond human cure. This shall be, as it is pleasing to Him, and good for myself." *

Another reason for Basil's unwillingness to be brought forward as a candidate for the see of Cæsarea, was his anticipation of bitter contentions. But Gregory of Nazianzen had resolved upon his elevation, and bestirred himself most energetically to procure it ; and his father, the venerable Bishop of Nazianzen, travelled to Cæsarea on that account, although his health was so infirm, that his litter was like to have been his bier ; still he professed himself willing, if it so pleased God, to die, engaged in so good a cause. Nor was he unsuccessful—Basil was elected, and was consecrated by the good old bishop, who then returned to his own diocese, where he lived four years longer, dying in the year 374, having lived nearly a hundred years. He was found dead in the attitude of prayer.

Basil did not disappoint the expectations of his friends. His conduct as a bishop "seemed as much to surpass himself, as he had before surpassed others."†

* Basil. Ep.

† Butler.

In all matters of discipline he was firm and resolute, and would allow of no irregularity in the performance of any Church functions. Nor did he spare his personal labour. He preached incessantly to crowded congregations, often when from illness he seemed scarcely able to articulate, and his simple natural style brought home the truths of which he spoke, with a surprising force. He instituted various night offices, which had a highly beneficial effect upon the people. Besides this, he went about amongst them indefatigably, visiting the poor and sick, and himself superintending the administration of several charitable institutions which he had founded. Among these was an asylum for lepers on an immense scale, and in which Basil took a peculiar interest.

At this time Basil is described as tall and thin, of a dark complexion, his features regular, and his general aspect impressive and agreeable. When a young man, he possessed a considerable share of the personal beauty which distinguished his family ; but intense study, constant abstinence, and habitual ill-health, had given him a premature care-worn age, so that at forty he seemed an old man. Yet many of those who wished to resemble Basil in character, attempted to imitate him in appearance. Thus Gregory writes,—“Such were the virtues of the man—such the fulness of his celebrity, that others in order to gain reputation, copied many even of his

peculiarities, nay his bodily imperfections ; I mean, for instance, his paleness, his beard, the character of his gait, his deliberateness in speaking, as being generally deep in thought and intent on his subject ; which things most of them copying ill, and indeed not understanding, turned into gloom ; moreover, the quality of his garment, and the shape of his bed, and his mode of eating, nothing of which was studied in him, but natural and spontaneous.”*

Of his manners Gregory says : “ Who made himself more amiable than he to the well-conducted ? or more severe when men were in sin ? whose very smile was many a time praise, whose silence a reproof, punishing the evil in a man’s own conscience. If he was not full of talk, nor a jester, nor a holder forth, nor generally acceptable from being all things to all men, and shewing good nature, what then ? Yet who so pleasant as he in social intercourse, as I know, who have had such experience of him ? Who could tell a story with more wit ? Who could jest so playfully ? Who could give a hint more delicately, so as neither to be overstrong in his rebuke, nor remiss through his gentleness.”†

Yet by his enemies Basil was accused of pride and haughtiness ; which Gregory indignantly denies. “ Is it possible for a man to embrace lepers,

* Greg. Orat. xx. Tran. Ch. of the Fathers.

† Ibid.

abasing himself so far, and yet to be supercilious towards those who are in health ? To waste his flesh with abstinence, and yet be swollen in soul with empty elation—to condemn the Pharisee, and to enlarge on his fall through pride, and to know that Christ descended even to a servant's form, and ate with publicans, and washed the disciples' feet, and disdained not the Cross, that He might nail to it *my* sin, and yet to soar above the clouds, and count no one his equal ; as appears to them who are jealous of him ? But I suppose it was the self-possession of his character, and composure, and polish, which they named pride."

Amongst those who opposed Basil's election to the See of Cæsarea, was Gregory, his uncle, who had supplied the place of a father to his nephews and nieces, after the death of the elder Basil ; a circumstance which naturally increased the pain felt by the lowly and gentle bishop at their estrangement. He wrote to his uncle in the following terms :—

"I have kept silence ; must there be no end of it ? In the prophet's words 'I have been still, and refrained myself as a woman in travail,' always anxious to see or hear from you, always disappointed for my sins. No other cause can be assigned for the present state of things, except that my estrangement from your affection is an infliction upon me for my past transgressions. . . . The time of my punish-

ment has been long indeed. So I can hold no longer, and am the first to speak. . . . If therefore there is any consolation in Christ—if there is any fellowship of the spirit—if any bowels and mercies, fulfil my prayer; put an end to this gloom. No one's features were ever more strongly marked than your soul is characterised with peaceableness and gentleness. It becomes such an one to draw others to him, and to give to all who approach him to be filled, as it were, with the fragrant oil of his own goodness. There may be obstacles just now, but in a short time the blessedness of peace will be recognised. . . . Tell me if I am anywhere wrong, and I shall be the better in future. But it is impossible to do so without intercourse. If on the other hand I have committed no offence, wherefore are you angry?"* This appeal, in which so much sincerity and humility are apparent, was not ineffectual, and Basil had the comfort of renewed friendship with his uncle.

Basil had not been long in possession of his new office, when the storm of persecution lowered over him. Valens, who was bent upon Arianizing the Church of Cæsarea, commanded the pretorian prefect, Modestus, to offer to Basil the alternative of conforming to the Arian Creed, or of resigning his bishopric.

* Basil, Ep. 59.

Modestus accordingly summoned Basil, who appeared before him with his customary composure and dignity. At first the prefect addressed him courteously, but, finding that he was inflexible, changed his tone, and angrily asked Basil what he meant by persisting in his obstinate disobedience to the emperor's will ? Basil answered, "Because his will is inconsistent with that of my Sovereign Lord, and I cannot worship any human creature, being myself a subject of that Lord, and commanded to be like Him." "Do you know his dignity to whom you speak ?" asked Modestus. "I do," was the reply, "and I respect your dignity, but that of God is greater. We are both His servants, and among Christians greatness depends not upon rank but upon faith." Angry at this indifference to his rank, Modestus passionately inquired if Basil had no fear of the penalties it was in his power to inflict—confiscation, exile, torture, and even death itself. Basil smiled as he replied, "What are such threats to me ? He who has nothing to lose can scarce fear confiscation, and I have no possessions save these mean garments, and some few books. Neither does he fear exile who counts no spot on earth his home, being here but a pilgrim and a sojourner, seeking a safer place of rest. Heaven is my home. Nor do I fear torture—my frail body would endure but little—you could strike but one blow and my pain

is past—I should but depart the sooner to Him, for Whose service alone I am willing to live, and after Whom my soul yearns.”

Modestus expressed his astonishment that Basil dared to speak thus freely. “Perhaps,” was the answer, “you have not before met with a Christian bishop, or under such circumstances you would have found the same conduct. In matters of this world we would be the humblest and gentlest of all men, and would not exalt ourselves against a prince or any other man. But when God and the things concerning Him are involved, we overlook all else, and fix our eyes only on Him. And we rather glory in fire and sword, torture and prison, in such case. Therefore threaten, and insult me as you will. Tell the emperor that nothing shall induce me to disobey my Master, or to assent to an heretical and impious creed.”

Modestus told him he must be mad. To which Basil replied, as did St. Paul, “I am not mad, but I speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”*

Modestus dismissed him, considerably impressed by the resolute determination and noble spirit shewn by the bishop, and reporting his ill-success to Valens, said, “We are conquered by this bishop, whom no threatenings can shake, no arguments move, no pro-

* Acts xxvi. 25.

mises allure. Timorous or mean men may be wrought upon, but as for him, except by open force, we have no chance of conquering him."

Valens did not continue his efforts to vanquish Basil ; but rather appears to have felt the influence of his Christian firmness ; for shortly after, on the feast of the Epiphany, when he attended Divine Service in the principal church, where Basil was officiating, the emperor, like Felix, trembled under the powerful preaching of this worthy successor of the Apostle ; and he is described as approaching the altar with his oblation, (according to the custom of the Church,) in so great an agitation, that had not one of the officiating ministers assisted him, he would have fallen.

Notwithstanding this impression, Valens was persuaded to banish the good bishop ; but when the sentence was brought for the imperial signature, three pens successively broke in his hand,* which the terrified emperor took as a sign of the Divine displeasure. This impression was confirmed by the seizure of his only son, named Valentinian Galatus, a child of six years old. That very night he was seized with a violent fever, and the physicians agreed in pronouncing him to be beyond the aid of human skill. While Valens lay prostrate on the

* They were probably made of reeds.

earth, overwhelmed by the bitterness of his sudden blow, the Empress Dominica came to him, and earnestly besought him to summon the holy Bishop Basil, whose prayers might haply avail them to the preservation of their cherished child.

Valens consented, and Basil willingly came to the palace, and warned the emperor that if he wished his prayers to be heard, he must engage to bring up his son in the Catholic faith. Valens hesitated, and Basil replied, "Then God's will be done concerning the child."* He was baptized, but by an Arian bishop, and in a day or two the little Galatus died.

Shortly after this (371) Cappadocia was severed into two provinces, and Tyana became the metropolis of the second half. Upon this, Anthimus, Bishop of Tyana, asserted his rank to be that of a Metropolitan, and consequently that he was no longer under Basil's jurisdiction.

This the bishop considered as an injury to ecclesiastical order and law, and he consequently set himself steadily against all such innovation. "The state might alter its boundaries," he said, "but that could not affect those of the Church." However Anthimus commenced a system of vexatious opposition, seizing upon church-lands, and in various ways causing division and feud amongst those who should have been bound together in love and amity.

* Cave.

Basil lamented his painful situation to his friend Gregory, who instantly offered his services ; “ I will come if you wish me, to advise with you, if the sea wants water, or you a counsellor ; at all events to gain benefit, and to act the philosopher by bearing ill-usage in your company.”

The friendly offer was accepted, and Basil and Gregory went together into the severed province to see if anything could be done. The most effectual remedy which occurred to Basil, was to increase the number of bishoprics, so as to put more shepherds among the weak and easily betrayed flock ; and to one of these, Sasima by name, he appointed Gregory.

This leads us to contemplate one of the most painful passages in St. Basil's life ; for this appointment led to the breach of the long and deeply cherished friendship that had existed between these two holy men. “ A man ought to take much thought,” says Basil, “ yea, and pass many sleepless nights, and seek his duty from God with many tears, ere he ventures to break up a friendship.” He was truly

“ Rich in love

And sweet humanity, and himself,

To the degree that he desired, beloved,”*

until this time, and we cannot but impute the blame rather to Gregory than to Basil.

* Wordsworth.

The former was by nature timid, yielding and disposed to shrink from coming into rough contact with the world. He had reluctantly yielded to his father's wish in taking holy orders ; but from the episcopacy he recoiled, as a burden far too heavy for him to bear ; and in addition he entertained an especial aversion to Sasima, and seems to have considered the appointment as an intended mark of contempt and slight. For a long time he withstood all solicitations both of his father and his friend, but at length he was consecrated by the hands of Basil himself at Cæsarea, about the middle of the year 372. But although consecrated to the see, he never took possession. Anthimus, Bishop of Tyana, who had great power with the governor, and was master of all the roads and avenues which led to the city, refused to admit him, and Gregory giving up the attempt, not perhaps with much reluctance, returned again to Nazianzum.

At this point it was that the interruption commenced of that holy friendship which had so long existed. Upon Gregory's return to Nazianzum, Basil accused his friend of sloth and inactivity, while Gregory defended himself on the plea of solitude and retirement. So far did the estrangement lead them, that Gregory wrote an angry letter to Basil, implying that pride and self-importance had made him indifferent to the ties of friendship, and say-

ing, "Well, play the man, be strong, turn everything to your own glory, as rivers suck up the mountain rill, thinking little of friendship or intimacy, compared with high aims and piety, and disregarding what the world will think of you for all this, being the property of the Spirit alone ; while on my part, so much shall I gain from this your friendship, not to trust in friends, nor to put anything above God."

Basil was, not unnaturally, much hurt and displeased at this attack from a quarter where above all others, he looked for affection and support, and he expressed his feelings to Gregory ; but Gregory persisted in his refusal to occupy the see of Sasima, and abandoned it to the rival bishop appointed by Anthimus, and thus the friends parted in anger.

Gregory remained at Nazianzum, and Basil continued to struggle on in his arduous position,—but all angry feelings must have been softened and effaced by time ; for when Gregory's father died in 374, we find St. Basil instantly travelling (in spite of the infirmities which made any such exertion real suffering to him) to Nazianzum, to console Gregory, and assist him in the press of business which was brought upon him by this event ; and on the part of Gregory his former love still existed, though wounded by what appeared to him a slight, for we find him after Basil's death most anxious to do him

honour, writing epitaphs to his memory, and pronouncing over him a funeral oration: "This, O Basil, to thee from me—this offering to thee from a tongue once most dear to thee, thy fellow in honour and in age."

But their friendship was never outwardly renewed, thus giving one more instance of the instability of earthly things, and the sure wisdom of Him who directed us to set our affections on things above. Friendship is a sacred and a holy gift, but even therein lurketh a danger lest we set it before God, and if so, it is but a greater blessing that God should sever and disperse it.

CHAPTER III.

All thine other journeys past,
 Gird thee and make ready fast
 For thy longest and thy last,—

* * * *

Jesus, Saviour, stand Thou by,
 When the last sleep seals our eye.

REV. R. C. TRENCH.

DEPLORABLE STATE OF THE CHURCH—BASIL'S LETTER TO ST. ATHANASIUS—LETTER TO THE WESTERN BISHOPS—BASIL AFFORDS SANCTUARY TO A WIDOW—EUSTATHIUS OF SEBASTE—ST. EPHREM COMES TO CÆSAREA—BASIL'S LABOURS—LETTER TO THE SEPARATISTS OF DAZIMONA—HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE DESOLATION OF THE CHURCH—BASIL'S LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH—HIS FUNERAL.

THE distracted state of the Church, combating as she was with Arians, Semi-Arians, Sabellians, &c., left Basil but little leisure to brood over his personal sorrows. Every exertion in his power, he made to restore calm and unity if possible. It was not long before the decease of St. Athanasius, that Basil addressed to him the following epistle :—

“I suppose there is no one feels such pain at the

present condition, or rather want of condition of the Churches, as your grace; comparing, as you naturally must, the present with the past, and considering the difference between them, and the certainty there is, if the evil proceeds at its present pace, that in a short time the Churches will altogether lose their present constitution. I have often thought with myself, if the corruption of the Churches seems so sad to me, what must be the feelings of one who has witnessed their former stability and unanimity in the faith. And as your holiness has more abundant grief, so one must suppose you have greater anxiety for their welfare. For myself, I have been long of opinion, according to my imperfect understanding of ecclesiastical matters, that there was but one way of succouring our Churches—i. e. the co-operation of the bishops of the West. If they would but shew, as regards our part of Christendom, the zeal which they manifested in the case of some heretics among themselves, there would be some chance of benefit to our common interests; the civil power would be persuaded by the argument derived from their number, and the laity in each place would follow their lead without hesitation. Now there is no one more able to accomplish this than yourself, from sagacity in counsel, and energy in action, and sympathy for the troubles of the brethren, and the reverence felt by the West for your hoary

head. . . . Most reverend father, leave the world some memorial worthy of your former deeds. Crown your former numberless combats for religion with this one additional achievement. Send to the bishops of the West, from your holy Church, men powerful in sound doctrine—relate to them our present calamities—suggest to them the mode of relieving us. Be a Samuel to the Churches; conduct the flocks harassed by war; offer prayers of peace; ask peace of the Lord, that He may give some token of peace to the Churches.”*

Basil likewise wrote to Damasus, bishop of Rome, beseeching his co-operation in the labour of restoring peace, and shortly afterwards addressed a general epistle to the bishops of the West. “The merciful God, Who ever joins comfort to affliction, has lately given me some consolation amid my sorrows, in the letters which our most reverend Father Athanasius has transmitted to us from your holiness. Our afflictions are well known without my telling; the sound of them has gone forth over all Christendom. The doctrines of the Fathers are despised; apostolical traditions are set at nought; the speculations of innovators hold sway in the Churches. Men have learned to be theorists instead of theologians. The wisdom of the world has the place of honour, having

* Ch. of the Fathers.

dispossessed the boasting of the Cross. The pastors are driven away, grievous wolves are brought in instead, and plunder the flock of Christ. Houses of prayer are destitute of preachers; the deserts are full of mourners; the old bewail, comparing what was with what is; more pitiable the young, as not knowing what they are deprived of.”*

And again, “The danger is not confined to one Church. . . . Almost from the borders of Illyricum down to the Thebais, this evil of heresy spreads itself. The doctrines of godliness are overturned, the rules of the Church are in confusion: the ambition of the unprincipled seizes upon places of authority. The accurate observance of the canons is no more; there is no more restraint upon sin. Unbelievers laugh at what they see, and the weak are unsettled; faith is doubtful, ignorance is poured over their souls, because the adulterers of the word in wickedness imitate the truth. Religious people keep silence, but every blaspheming tongue is let loose. Sacred things are profaned; those of the clergy who are sound in faith avoid the places of worship, as schools of impiety, and raise their hands in solitude with groans and tears to the Lord in Heaven. While then any Christians seem yet to be standing, hasten to us; our own brothers, yea we beseech you.

* Ibid.

Stretch out your hands, and raise us from our knees, suffer not the half of the world to be swallowed up in error ; nor faith to be extinguished in the countries whence it first shone forth. What is most melancholy of all, even the portion among us which seems to be sound, is divided in itself, so that calamities beset us like those which came upon Jerusalem when it was besieged."

Such was the lamentable state of things in the East. Nor was Basil free from personal troubles. A noble lady, left a widow, underwent considerable persecution from one high in civil power, who was anxious to make her his wife. At last the lady took refuge at the Altar, and claimed St. Basil's protection, which was immediately granted. The governor desired the bishop to give up the suppliant, but Basil replied, that the sanctuary of the Altar was inviolable, and that he could not comply.

The governor summoned Basil before the court, and received him with the most violent language, threatening to torture him, and tear out his liver. "If you do," replied Basil, with a smile, "you will rid me of a most troublesome inmate."

Meanwhile, the citizens rose, and surrounding the governor's house, loudly demanded the bishop, and at last they became so excited, that nothing could appease them but Basil's going amongst them and persuading them to return quietly to their homes.

The lady who had given rise to this tumult was placed by St. Basil in the house of retirement governed by his sister Macrina.

About the year 375, another trial came upon St. Basil, in the undoubted defection and heresy of Eustathius, Bishop of Sebaste, who had long been his friend, and to whose guilt Basil was sorely loath to open his eyes. The artful hypocrisy of this man contrived to keep his friend blinded for some time, but at last he was detected, and Basil found that he himself had been calumniated by this traitor to orthodoxy and friendship. He addressed him pathetically—expressing his heartfelt grief, and his unwillingness to enter into any self-defence, but rather to obey St. Paul, not avenging himself, but giving place unto wrath. And he continued his endeavours most ineffectually to restore Eustathius to communion with the orthodox Church.

One bright spot occurs in the heavy gloom which envelopes this part of the saint's career. This was the visit he received from St. Ephrem, who left his monastery at Edessa, where he led a life of seclusion and prayer, to see Basil, whom he had known previously.

Ephrem was a man of highly poetic and enthusiastic temperament, and he gives a warmly-coloured description of Basil in his church. "I saw," he says, "that chosen vessel in the sanctuary, the ob-

ject of attention and admiration of his flock, abounding with majestic words ; so that the whole temple seemed inspired with his spirit. I beheld the tender and compassionate care which he bestowed upon the widow and the orphan. I beheld the church which he has so wonderfully ordered ; and I heard flow from his mouth the eloquence of St. Paul, the Gospel truth—the fear of God.”*

In his transport, St. Ephrem seemed to behold a white dove hovering over St. Basil, and the service over, he hastened eagerly to fall at his feet and embrace them. For some short time they enjoyed one another's society, and then separated. St. Ephrem returned back to his peaceful monastery, where he died in a good old age not long after St. Basil.

But troubles upon troubles still remained. Not only the defections of friends and the schisms of Churches, but now the infirmities of a weak body began to manifest the signs of the Saint's departure, not long to be delayed. He was shortly seized with so very severe an illness, that all hope of recovery seemed extinguished ; but still his work was not quite accomplished, and though Basil says that his sickness made him almost like a plant, confined ever to one spot, he continued to fulfil his laborious duties. He was unable to go to the death-bed of his mother Emmelia, who breathed her last a few

* Tillemont.

years before her son—in the arms of two of her children, Peter and Macrina. Wherever his presence was needed, Basil, if possible, dragged his weary suffering body, and where he could not himself be present, he sought by writing to unite all in defending their holy mother the Church. Thus when a district of Cæsarea, Dazimona by name, separated from the metropolitan, Basil wrote, “I live in much affliction and grief, for that you are wanting to me. For when God tells me, Who took on Him His sojourn in the flesh for the very purpose that, by patterns of duty, we might regulate our life, and might by His Own Voice announce to us the gospel of the kingdom, when He says, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another’; and whereas the Lord left His own peace to His disciples as a farewell gift, when about to complete the dispensation in the flesh, saying ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you’; I cannot persuade myself that without love to others, and without, as far as rests with me, peaceableness towards all, I can be called a worthy servant of Jesus Christ. . . . Nothing, brethren, can separate us from one another, but deliberate estrangement—we have one Lord, one Faith, one Hope. The hands need each other—the feet steady each other—the eyes possess their clear apprehension from agreement.”

St. Basil afterwards visited the divided district,

and then enjoyed a few days' repose in the house of his brother Peter, a spot endeared to him as his residence in early youth with his grandmother, and later on, as the scene of his peaceful retreat from the world and its glare.

The insubordination of the church of Neo-Cæsarea, was a fresh subject of pain to Basil—and his gentle heart-searching admonitions failed in their desired effect.

It would be inconsistent with the limits of this little work to enter into the details of the various disputes and dissensions which continued to break out on all sides. But a general impression of the deplorable state of affairs may be gathered from a letter of St. Basil's, written A.D. 376.

“This is the thirteenth year since the heretical war rose against us, during which more afflictions have come on the churches than are remembered since Christ's gospel was preached. Matters have come to this : the people have left their houses of prayer, and assemble in deserts, a pitiable sight ; women and children, old men and infirm, wretchedly faring in the open air, amid the most profuse rains and snow-storms, and wind, and frost of winter ; and in summer under a scorching sun. To this they submit, because they will not have part in the wicked Arian leaven. . . . The people are in lamentation ; in continued tears at home and abroad, con-

doling in each other's sufferings. . . . There is a cry in the city, a cry in the country, in the roads in the desert ; one pitiable voice of all uttering melancholy things. Joy and spiritual cheerfulness are no more ; our feasts are turned to mourning ; our houses of prayer closed—our altars deprived of spiritual worship."

The death of St. Athanasius seemed to have unloosed the bands of iniquity, so that Basil says he was tempted to ask whether the Lord had utterly forsaken His Church. "I am wasted with sickness and a prisoner to my bed—beseech you Heaven for me, that the few days, I might almost say hours, that I have yet to live, may be spent in the service of religion and the Church of Christ."*

Basil had often—very often thought that the time of his deliverance was at hand, and nothing but his entire submission to the will of his Heavenly Master had prevented him from murmuring at the prolongation of his worn flickering life. But he had learned to say from his very inmost heart—

"Lord, take Thy way, for sure that way is best,
Stretch or contract me, Thy poor debtor,
This is but tuning of my breast,
To make the music better."†

But now, he hailed with thankfulness the approach of death, for such indeed it was : with difficulty he

Cave.

† George Herbert.

stood once more at the altar where he had for eight years ministered as bishop, and laid his hands upon some candidates for holy orders—this was his last effort—he went from the church to his bed, whence he never rose again.

The moment it was known in the city that the bishop's illness was likely to terminate fatally, the desolation and affliction which reigned throughout, bespoke how much he was loved. All those who had experienced his paternal care came crowding around the episcopal residence, with tears, and lamentations, and fervent prayers, "as though they were resolved to arrest the soul that was now taking its flight to Heaven."*

But God willed otherwise, and with his last breath uttering the solemn words, "Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit"—St. Basil departed from his earthly trials, to rest in the mansions prepared by his Ascended Lord.

"If a bright star were prisoned in a tomb,
Her captive flame must needs burn there;
But when the hand that locked her up gives room,
She'll shine through all the sphere."†

All Cæsarea wept over her departed pastor, and all the world lamented in Basil "the herald of truth and the bond of peace between all the Churches."‡

* Cave.

† H. Vaughan, 1651.

‡ "Le héraut de la vérité, et le nœud de paix de toutes les églises."—TILLEMONT.

He expired on the Feast of the Circumcision, A.D. 379, and on that of the Epiphany his earthly remains were deposited in the grave, borne by the priests of his church, and followed by vast multitudes of all ages, and of all ranks, men, women and children—who pressed to touch the bier, or at least to gaze on it, as though to receive a last benediction from the departed saint. Every street through which the corpse was carried was densely crowded, so that the procession could scarcely move along—and when the funeral anthem was raised, its solemn tones were drowned in the wailings of the people, whose excited feelings burst forth in cries and tears.

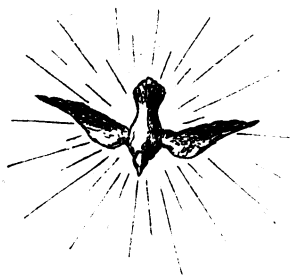
At last the procession reached the principal church of Cæsarea, and the corpse was committed to the tomb, with a pomp the saint had ever shunned during his life.*

His epitaph was composed by St. Gregory Nazianzen, who had now buried all unkind feelings in the grave of his friend, and remembered only the affection of former days. “My companion, my guide, mine own familiar friend; we took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends.” Ps. lv. 14.

The church of Rome commemorates St. Basil the

* “The saints live in sackcloth, and they are buried in silk and jewels.”

Great on June 14th, the day of his episcopal ordination; but he is not commemorated in the Church of England, although many with inferior claims are mentioned in her calendar. His works consist of Homilies, and Commentaries on Holy Scripture. His style is pure and elegant, and his thoughts full of devotion and grandeur. But neither his learning nor his eloquence are to be compared with his humility and his courage. Butler thus sums up his character: "This is the only true greatness. If the saint with his extraordinary talents had made a fortune in the world, gained applause, riches, and the first honours in the empire, what would all this have availed him? What advantage is it now to Demosthenes or Cicero to have been the masters of eloquence. True Christian virtue is the only solid glory, and real good. Basil was only great, because he devoted himself and all his talents to the glory of God, and to procure advantages that surpass all things temporal, and which never fade."



ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

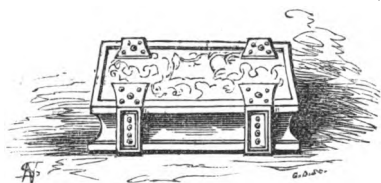
Preacher and Saint, whose name is Eloquence,
Well call'd they "Golden" thine impassion'd tongue,
On which Truth sat, and glowing manly sense,
And words that stand the fire, in wisdom strong,

And strong in charity. Th' imperial town
Throng'd round thee, and drunk in thy stern reproof,
Touch'd by thy saintly spirit; vice hung down
Her flower-wreathed head, court favour stood aloof.

Nor less thy zeal, in Nazianzen's chair,
That the King's daughter with her priestly choir
Might shine within. While thus thy deeds declare
Christ's Presence, wonder not if friends conspire

Against thee; forc'd near the rude Caspian main
To drink thy Master's Cup in exile, want, and pain.

THE CATHEDRAL.



LIFE OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM.

CHAPTER I.

“For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense.”

MILTON.

CHRYSOSTOM'S ELOQUENCE—TESTIMONIES TO IT—HIS PARENTAGE—DEATH OF HIS FATHER—HIS EDUCATION—ENTERS THE LEGAL PROFESSION—LEAVES IT—HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH BASIL—INCLINATION TOWARDS THE MONASTIC LIFE—HIS MOTHER'S REMONSTRANCES—HE CONSENTS TO CONTINUE IN HER HOUSE.

WE have spoken, in the life of St. Athanasius, somewhat disparagingly of Antioch and her school, but we must not forget that, though from thence sprung the heretic Arius and his followers, she was also the parent of many holy men; and among them of one than whom there are few whose names have claimed a more universal reverence than St. John Chrysostom, or “the Golden Lips,” an appellation gained for him by his wonderful eloquence, and which, from the effect

he produced upon those who heard him, he seems well to have deserved; for we find immense masses of people excited by his words, as though they were one individual, to emotions of remorse, shame, devotion, &c.; and that not only to the external demonstration of feeling, but to that surer test of corresponding actions. To quote all the tributes to St. Chrysostom's eloquence would be tedious; some few will however be valuable, especially as we find from them that it was not mere rhetoric or studied language, but the powerful outpourings of the heart which issued from the "Golden lips."

"He had," says Photinus, "a great gift of extempore speech, and an abundance of thoughts and words, which flowed forth as a mighty river. His style is always elevated and clear—his expressions well chosen, withal it is pleasing, and the tone of deep sincerity reaches and convinces the heart. In a word, he excels in language, in composition, in arrangement, in feeling, in all parts of discourse."*

Libanius, the great master of rhetoric of his day, prized highly the purity of Chrysostom's eloquence, but yet more highly his clearness and simplicity, free from all useless ornament.

"His preaching," says a writer, himself no mean master of language, "was not so much addressed

* Photinus, quoted by Tillemont.

to the opinions as to the consciences of men. He threw aside the subtleties of speculative theology, and repudiated in general the fine-drawn allegory in which the interpreters of Scripture had displayed their ingenuity. His scope was plain, severe, practical.”* And even Gibbon speaks thus: “Succeeding times have appreciated the genuine merit of Chrysostom. They unanimously attribute to the Christian orator the free command of an elegant and copious language; the judgment to conceal the advantages which he derived from the knowledge of rhetoric and philosophy; an inexhaustible fund of metaphors and similitudes, of ideas and images, to vary and illustrate the most familiar topics; the happy art of engaging the passions in the service of virtue; and of exposing the folly, as well as the turpitude, of vice, almost with the truth and spirit of a dramatic representation.”†

We shall have frequent cause to notice in more minute detail St. Chrysostom's preaching and its results; these extracts may therefore suffice, by way of introduction, and we now proceed to his early life.

Antioch, the birth-place of our Saint, was the chief city of Syria, and Josephus calls it the third

* Milman, History of Christianity.

† Gibbon's Decline and Fall.

city for greatness, pleasure, and plenty, in the whole Roman world.*

About the middle of the fourth century the chief commander of the army in Syria was Secundus, a man of note and dignity, from whose union with Anthusa, a lady of high birth likewise, sprang two children, a daughter, whose name has not reached us, and a son, John, of whose history we are now to speak. The precise date of his birth is somewhat doubtful, we may however safely place it between the years 347 and 354. Historians agree in saying that Secundus died shortly after his son's birth, leaving him in the tutelage of his mother Anthusa, who became a widow at the early age of twenty. He could hardly have had a better guardian; for her character seems to have been one of no ordinary stamp, but marked with piety, decision, and prudence. Young as she was, and well as she might have pleaded her need of an assistant and protector to her children, Anthusa resolved to enter into no second marriage, but to devote herself entirely to their education, and bring up her son so that in after years he might reward her for the sacrifices she now made for him. Not that Anthusa judged herself capable of directing the studies of the young John: she sought for him the first teachers of the

* Josephus, quoted by Cave. Rome and Alexandria were doubtless the other two.

day, and his talent for oratory being early observable, placed him under the instructions of the celebrated Libanius, who always showed a marked affection for his promising pupil.

Having spent the customary period as a pupil, John entered upon his professional career as a pleader in the Forum of Antioch; but disgusted with the duplicity and time-serving qualities which appeared to him as requisites for attaining any legal eminence, he speedily forsook this profession, without one lingering regret for the honours by this step placed out of his reach. Nor do we find that his mother, with the pardonable pride she might well feel in the promised excellence of her son, offered any opposition to his wishes.

But Libanius mourned bitterly over the change made by his favourite disciple, and on his death-bed lamented his loss, saying, that "had the Christians not stolen him, John would have been his fittest successor."*

John now placed himself under the instructions of Miletius, Bishop of Antioch, whose affections he completely won, not only by his superior talents, but by his intrinsic worth and pious character; and during the three years he remained with him, this attachment seems to have ripened daily. It appears, however, that the young ascetic, for such he was

* Sozomen.

now becoming, continued to live under his mother's roof, only stipulating for entire liberty as to all his hours and occupations.

Of all his friends none was so dear to him as Basil, and these two shared even their most secret thoughts, so that it might be said that the object of each towards the other was to

“ Urge him with his advancing tread,
Till, like twin stars, with even pace
Each lucid course be duly sped.”*

But Basil, who was probably more independent and less fettered by domestic ties, resolved upon adopting the monastic life, and earnestly sought to prevail upon his friend to do the same.

The proposal suited well with John's inclinations, and he prepared to comply ; but Anthusa having obtained some idea of what he intended, and shrinking from what was in fact the total loss of her treasured child to her, she led him to her room, and sitting down with him upon the very bed where she had brought him forth, burst into tears, and commenced a pathetic appeal to his tenderest feelings. “ My son,” thus she spoke, “ it was but a little time (so God was pleased to order it) that I had the happiness of your father's virtues and excellent conversation, for his death soon followed the pains I endured at your birth, and the same untimely stroke

* Keble.

made you an orphan and me a widow, bringing upon me those troubles and miseries, known but to those who have endured them. Yet have I borne them all for you. I have been content to be tossed by the storm and tempest, and being assisted by a Power from above, have not declined the hardships of this iron furnace; it not being the least support to me amid all my trials, that I could daily behold your face, and thus recall continually to my eyes the living image, the perfect character and resemblance of your deceased father. I have preserved your paternal inheritance untouched and entire, and yet have spared no cost to give you such an education as might raise you to a just esteem and reputation in the world. Think not that I say this to upbraid you; the only kind requital I ask for all I have done is, that you would not involve me in a second widowhood, nor revive my buried grief; stay but till I am gone; it is like that will not be long. For those that are young in spirit, there is some hope that they may reach old age; but for us who are grown old through care, nothing remains but a continual expectation of death. When therefore you have committed me to the ground, and laid mine beside your father's bones, then travel whither you please; do as you will; there will be none to hinder you. But while I live, be content that one house should hold us; do not so far provoke God against you, as thus miser-

ably to afflict your mother, who has not deserved it of you. Whoever may have your company, yet there can be none so ready to minister to your ease and freedom, nor can there be any to whom your credit and reputation can be as dear, as to me.”*

This touching appeal failed not in its desired effect. Throughout his life the heart of St. Chrysostom seems to have been peculiarly alive to affection and tenderness; and with the same feeling, perhaps, that has prompted the beautiful lines—

.....“ ’Twas Thine Own comfortable word
That made the lesson known:
Of all the dearest bonds we prove,
Thou countest son's and mother's love
Most sacred—most Thine own”,

he resisted the renewed solicitations of his friend Basil, and remained to be a “son of consolation” to his mother, without however abandoning the views that had led him to seek a monastic life; for under her roof he practised the most rigid austerity, in watchings, in fastings, and all means whereby to keep under his body; seeking to conquer every evil thought, even that of wrath against sinners, by turning rather to contemplate his own frailty. Thus he continued to live in almost as great solitude as if in a monastery, and probably acquiring that self-command and those powers which he afterwards needed in his arduous episcopal station.

* Cave.

CHAPTER II.

Did we but see,
When life first opened, how our journey lay
Between its earliest and its closing day:
Or view ourselves, as we one time shall be,
Who strive for the high prize, such sight would break
The youthful spirit, though bold for Jesus' sake.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

CHRYSOSTOM'S OCCUPATIONS—IS DESTINED FOR THE EPISCOPACY—HE AVOIDS IT—BASIL CONSECRATED—ENTERS A MONASTERY—CUSTOMS AND RULE OF LIFE THEREIN—RETURNS TO ANTIOCH AND IS ORDAINED DEACON—HIS HOMILIES—CHRYSOSTOM'S PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

EVEN during his retirement, Chrysostom was engaged in works of piety; he interrupted his studies (which seem, in addition to the grand object of theology, to have comprised Hebrew, Syriac, and the Lives of the Saints) to remonstrate with Theodore, one of his friends, who having at an early age dedicated himself to God's service, was now disposed to turn back to the world which he had renounced. The fervent and affectionate letter of the young ascetic, himself in the world, but not of it, had the

desired effect, under the blessing of God, and Theodore returned to his earlier choice, nor ever again forsook it.

But though Chrysostom saw in himself nothing that was good, and laboured thus in privation and penitence to purify his heart, the opinion of the world was far otherwise, and young as he was (he seems to have been but twenty-one*), the Syrian bishops fixed upon him and his friend Basil as fit persons to be raised to the episcopal office.

With the modesty naturally attendant upon exalted piety, Chrysostom shrunk from the charge; but fearing lest his example should influence Basil, whom he regarded as far more capable of it than himself, he concealed from him his true feelings, till, when the time drew near for their consecration, Chrysostom retired, and left Basil alone to receive the imposition of hands. The latter was accordingly made bishop, of what see does not appear quite certain, and discovering the fraud (if we may so call it) practised upon him by his friend, Basil reproached him warmly for it. Chrysostom, we are told, "smiled upon him, and taking him by the hand, offered to kiss it, thanking God that he had so successfully accomplished his desires."†

It was in compliance with Basil's earnest en-

* Cave.

† Ibid.

treaties that his loved friend would aid him with his counsel, that Chrysostom wrote one of his most valued works—*De Sacerdotio*.

Whether at this time our Saint lost that tender mother, for whose sake he had sacrificed his own wishes, or whether Anthusa herself, unwilling any longer to be an impediment to her son's heavenward course, loosed the bonds of affection she had hitherto cast around him, we know not; but about the year 376 we find him forsaking Antioch and retiring into one of the numerous monasteries scattered amongst the surrounding mountains, where he could give himself up to those religious practices, after which his heart yearned. The rule of life in these monasteries was strict, but, according to Chrysostom, happy; for he speaks of their inhabitants as "free from all manner of care, and occupied only with thoughts of God and His kingdom, like Adam in Paradise, or rather like the angels in heaven."*

They rose long before sunrise, and, after matins, were occupied in field labour, study, copying manuscripts, and silent meditation, interrupted only by the appointed hours of prayer, Tierce, Sext, None, and Vespers, after which came their simple meal of bread, salt, and herbs; and after Compline, they slept till midnight, when, like David of old, they rose to praise the Lord.

* Tillemont.

“ When the end of one of the brethren was announced,” says an old writer,* “ they said not that he was dead, but that he had finished his course ; and instead of the tears and lamentations of the men of this world, his friends gave thanks to God, praying that they might likewise in due time close their mortal combat, and rest from their travail. They bore him to his grave, chaunting hymns ; nor did they call those funeral rites, but rather the conducting a friend who returns to his home.” And hence, too, the day of the death of a saint is commonly called his birth-day ; and in the same spirit our Holy Mother, in her beautiful burial service, bids us “ give hearty thanks that it hath pleased God to deliver our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world ; beseeching Him to hasten His kingdom, that we too may have our perfect consummation and bliss.”

Five years were thus spent, not wholly without effort on Chrysostom’s part, for he tells us himself, that at first he doubted how he should be able to accommodate himself to the unsavoury and scanty food of the monks, and how his delicate and high-born frame would bear the rude manual labours which were required of him. But these difficulties vanished when grappled with ; and he bore all, and even more than monastic obedience demanded.

* Tillemont.

In the year 381 Chrysostom returned to the world. God not being willing, doubtless, that one so eminently calculated to serve Him in active life, should pass his days in a retirement, which however had probably been the means of confirming and strengthening his religious character. His health, too, seems to have suffered somewhat under his increasing austerities; indeed at no time does he appear to have been a robust man.

Returning to Antioch, Chrysostom was ordained deacon, and for five years ministered at the Altar, during most of which time Flavianus was bishop, who having the same esteem for him which his predecessors had, ordained him priest, A. D. 386, and seems to have committed to him an almost episcopal authority.

The same humility which had caused Chrysostom to shrink from the episcopacy, now made him consider himself unfit for his present charge. In his first sermon he lamented that so great burthen should be placed on so young and feeble shoulders, and begged his people to assist him by their prayers, that he might be able to go through with it, and acquit himself of the trust that God had committed to his charge at the great day of accounts.*

It is curious to read the account of the manner in

* Cave.

which this most popular preacher was listened to. "The people hearkened to his sermons with an inconceivable ardour and attention, and frequently *interrupted him with cries of joy and clapping of hands*, which displeased his humility; so that often he told them he derived no pleasure from their applause, but would rather see them practise the truths which he taught them."*

And it is very evident that the preacher's object was indeed the glory of God, and guiding of his flock, and not his own glory,—practical lessons of piety forming the principal part of all his discourses; and whatever might be his subject, he always brought it to the great truth, without which he esteemed all else imperfect, *i. e.* the necessity of true repentance and contrition of heart, and the infinite and unbounded Loving kindness and Mercy of God, through His crucified Son. So that we read he was sometimes called the Preacher of Mercy and the Star of Repentance.†

He treated of but little matter at once, that he might do it the more fully; not in order to display his own fecundity of genius, but that the people might more easily grasp and seek to follow the truth; fearing lest an overabundant supply should

* Tillemont.

† "Le prédicateur de la miséricorde, et l'œil éclairé de la pénitence."

choke rather than nourish them. Neither did he go deeply into mysteries and obscurities, preferring to keep within the understanding of his hearers; he never sought to display his deep knowledge or science; for his heart was filled with the desire, not of his own glory, but of the spiritual welfare of his people, and he regarded each individual soul as a precious deposit committed to his care; and sought to lead them, not merely to listen with "itching ears" to the sweet and eloquent words which poured from his lips, but to carry away the impression thereof and weave it into their daily life. With this object Chrysostom would frequently tell his hearers on what passage of Scripture he intended next to address them, in order that they might study it over at home, and be the better prepared to profit by his instructions.

And this eager love for the people of Antioch was most disinterested, for Chrysostom received nothing from the Church to which he devoted his whole energies, but rather gave up to charitable purposes his whole paternal income, which we may reasonably suppose to have been considerable, reserving only enough for his absolute necessities.

In personal appearance he was not calculated thus to fascinate and overawe the multitude. Little in stature, his head "bald, like Elisha," his eyes deep set, but keen and penetrating, so that he would read

the hearts of those who approached him. His whole appearance was that of a man mortified to the world; one who though passing through it and fulfilling all his duties in it, yet had a continual and abiding consciousness that it was not his rest, but that he was journeying towards a

“City glorious,
A great and distant city.
A mansion incorruptible.”*

Nevertheless he avoided all affectation of humility, nor sought to fast before the eyes of men. The feeling which dwelt in his heart was far too real, too deep, to need any such display; nor did he consider that bare feet and a ragged tunic could make him more acceptable before God. Such was the man who, one might almost say, reigned over Antioch.

* Tennyson.

CHAPTER III.

This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught.

To drawen folks to heaven, with fairnesse,
By good ensample was his besinesse.

He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him no spiced conscience,
But Christes lore, and His Apostles twelve,
He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.

CHAUCER.

REVOLT OF THE STATUES—ALARM OF THE PEOPLE—CHRY-
SOSTOM'S SERMONS—FLAVIANUS GOES TO THE EMPEROR
THEODOSIUS—HE PARDONS THE CITY.

CHRYSOSTOM continued absorbed in his occupation of teaching, when an event occurred which rendered him still dearer to his country. In the year 387, the emperor Theodosius laid a heavy tax upon the wealthy city of Antioch ; whether just or unjust it is not our province to decide ; but the imperial officers acting with insolence and rigour, aroused the Antiochians, by nature excitable and turbulent, and

rising with a mad fury, they beat the obnoxious officials, and dragging down the statues not only of Theodosius and his sons Arcadius and Honorius, but even that of the late empress Flavilla, they broke them to pieces—threw the shattered remains about the streets, and vented their rage in every conceivable insult on the unoffending statues.

The outbreak, which in fact originated with the rabble, was easily quelled, and then came the horrible alarm at the consequences that might be expected from Theodosius' wrath; the stern and relentless nature of which was not unknown to them. Such as were able, hastily fled the city, the remainder of the population shut themselves up in their houses, and gave way to the most miserable forebodings. The city seemed as though deserted; the theatre, so favourite a resort, was closed—the circus, the baths, even the schools were shut.

The local government commenced the dreaded severities, and the prisons were crowded with the most illustrious and wealthiest citizens. Chrysostom has left an account of this fearful period in his Homilies, called "Of the Statues," which were preached during the time of greatest despair. It chanced to be the holy season of Lent, and the fervent and devoted priest of God sought to lead the almost prostrate people to a deep and true repentance, not for this crime only, but for all the sins of their

past lives ; leading them to consider if so great was their terror now of an earthly judgment, what that should be—

“ When His coming shall be nigh,
Who shall all things judge and try ;” *

and further reminding them that as Christians they should be superior to the fear of death : they might fail of pardon here, but in the world to come it was certain to all who truly sought it.

It has been universally remarked, that in times of national or general affliction, men turn to religion, as their only stronghold, and such was now the case. The preacher himself says that all men were terrified into thinking seriously, and, forsaking their profligate habits, strove to adopt those to which, alas! they were but too unaccustomed. “ Many who had never been within the church doors, but spent their whole time at the theatre, now fled to the church as a common sanctuary, and there stayed from morning to night. You could scarce hear anything but weeping and mourning, prayers and tears. Peculiar litanies were framed for the purpose, and hymns of lamentation, to implore that God would dispose the heart of the emperor to clemency and compassion towards them.” †

But whilst the “ Golden Mouth” was pouring forth

* Dies Iræ.

† Cave.

his treasures to the afflicted people, their bishop, although his years and infirmities were very great (and although his sister, who was lying at the point of death, needed his presence), departed on a long and tedious journey,* at an unfavourable season of the year, to endeavour to move the Christian emperor to practise the precepts of his Divine Master, and as he himself hoped for forgiveness, now to forgive.

Libanius, Chrysostom's former teacher, went also, to exert his far-famed eloquence. In general, however, the heathen philosophers, forgetting their maxims of stoicism and courage, fled; while the very monks, who usually shunned all intercourse with other men, now esteeming whatsoever they did unto one of the least of these, was done unto their Lord, disregarded their wonted habits and inclinations, and hastened to the city, seeking, now by remonstrance and entreaty to the imperial officers, now by exhortation and consolation to the sufferers, to do all in their power to benefit both body and soul.

There was one Macedonius, a poor little old man, very ignorant, but having that wisdom which cometh from above, who planting himself before the imperial commissioners, commanded them to leave their

* Eight hundred miles.—GIBBON.

chariots, and hearken to him. Aware of his saintly character, they complied—and Macedonius charged them with a message to the emperor.

“Man is made in the image and likeness of God : dare not wantonly to destroy this image, lest thou provoke the Divine Artist, by defacing His Image, which cannot seem unreasonable to thee,—thou who art so provoked at the defacing of a brazen statue. And yet how vast the difference between a senseless image, and one that is endued with life, motion, and reason. The statue of brass thou mayest replace and multiply, but it is beyond all the power of empire and majesty, to create but one single hair of the head of any of those thou shalt destroy.”

It is creditable to the imperial commissioners that they listened respectfully and attentively to Macedonius, and repeated his message to their royal master. Meanwhile, the venerable Flavianus had arrived at Constantinople, and mournfully and meekly, yet preserving his dignity as the priest of God, presented himself before the incensed monarch.

Dispassionately, and for that very reason perhaps more terribly, Theodosius addressed him, recapitulating all his favours and benefits to the ungrateful city, and dwelling with peculiar, and not unnatural bitterness, on the cruel insults offered to the memory of his deceased wife.

Flavianus answered with the wisdom of the ser-

pent, and the innocence of the dove ; and with the authority of God's minister.

He began by acknowledging the truth of Theodosius' complaints ; admitted that his guilty subjects deserved nought but evil at his hands, but appealed to the emperor's magnanimity—urging that in pardoning so great a personal insult, he would erect to himself nobler statues than those that were broken, in the hearts of men : then becoming eloquent as he spoke, the good bishop told his sovereign that in future ages, when his great, his warlike, deeds were forgotten, those of mercy and long-suffering would stand forth. “ I come, a poor aged bishop, with authority from our Great Master, to tell thee, ‘ If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours.’ Remember that day, when we shall all give account of our actions ; when the mercy now shown by thee may win for thee mercy. Others may present thee with gold and silver—I come with Divine laws and precepts, which I offer instead of all other gifts, beseeching thee to imitate our Great Sovereign, Who, though daily offended by us all, willeth not the death of sinners.”

Theodosius sought to conceal the emotion caused within him by the bishop's words ; but at that moment, by Flavianus' desire, one of the mournful litanies composed on the occasion was chanted.*

* Sozomen, book vii. chap. 23.

Losing all self-command, the emperor burst into tears, and turning to his venerable monitor, said with genuine Christian feeling: "What am I, that I should boast of an act of mercy, when my Saviour, though crucified by those amongst whom He had been doing such miracles, yet prayed for the pardon of His very crucifiers: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' How then dare I refuse forgiveness to my fellow-servants?"

The conquest over self once gained, the emperor longed that his people should know that they were pardoned—and he urged that the bishop should hasten back to Antioch. "They must yet be uneasy," he said; "but when they see their pilot, they will forget the storm."

Flavianus hastened joyfully homewards—the success of his mission travelling before him, and on his arrival at the glad season of Easter, he found the whole city in festive array, and never, perhaps, was the "Day of days" celebrated with more heartfelt joy and gratitude than on this occasion. Chrysostom, who preached upon the subject, failed not to turn it to a practical purpose, and urge that his people should let their relief from so great a misery have a corresponding effect on their sin-bound souls. "Let your moderation be known unto all men—the Lord is at hand."

CHAPTER IV.

His active soul could never be
At home, but in eternity.

So whiles he travelled here beneath,
He liv'd, when others only breathe.
For not a sand of time slipp'd by
Without its action sweet as high—
So good, so peaceable, so blest—
Angels alone can speak the rest.

JOHN CLEVELAND.

CHRYSTOSTOM MADE BISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE—HIS RE-
FORMATIONS—PERSONAL PIETY—HIS ADMONITIONS—LOVE
FOR HIS FLOCK—EPISCOPAL LABOUR—DOMESTIC HABITS—
HIS PUPILS—PROTECTS EUTROPIUS—GAINAS—THEOPHILUS
OF ALEXANDRIA—CHRYSTOSTOM VISITS EPHEBUS.

BUT the time was at hand when Antioch was to lose her greatest treasure, and he who in tribulation and in joy had been her faithful pastor, was to be summoned to a wider sphere of action, and exchange his position, where nought save ardent love and admiration surrounded him, for the trials and turmoil of the episcopal throne, which were to lead him at last to the martyr's crown.

The mild Gregory of Nazianzen had been succeeded in the patriarchate of Constantinople, by Nectarius, who filled it for sixteen years, with a tender and weak rule, little suited for so arduous an office. Theodosius had breathed his last, A.D. 395, and his sons, Arcadius and Honorius, were respectively emperors of the east and west. It was a matter of great importance to Arcadius, resident at Constantinople, who should be its spiritual ruler, and when the name of Chrysostom was mentioned, he, as well as the clergy and people, hailed it with joy. But so well was it foreseen that the people of Antioch would warmly oppose the removal of one, whom from his very birth they laid claim to, that Asterius, civil governor of the East, had recourse to artifice, and inviting the preacher to accompany him to inspect a church without the city walls, fairly took him prisoner, and hastened off to Pagræ, where he delivered his charge to the emperor's envoys. Thus forcibly was the meek and lowly man of God thrust into one of the most exalted positions the Church could offer ; and on February 26, A.D. 398, he was solemnly consecrated and enthroned—a large convention of bishops being present, amongst whom Theophilus, of Alexandria, alone opposed him ; dreading his vigour and fixedness of purpose, probably from his general character ; although ancient writers are willing to attribute the dislike of our

saint, to the inflexible determination discovered by the Alexandrian bishop in his lofty brow and piercing eye.

Chrysostom had no easy post to fill. We have said that Nectarius' rules had been blameably mild, and there were numberless abuses in the government of the Church, which the new bishop was not the man to leave unredressed. He resolved to restore the ancient discipline, and commenced by enforcing upon the clergy the abandonment of their corrupt and luxurious habits; setting the example by diligently inquiring into the expenses of his own house, and reducing considerably the style in which his predecessor had lived—employing the sums thereby economized in the erection of hospitals for the sick and infirm. He likewise restored all the night offices, in order that those of the laity, whose occupations prevented their attendance in church during the day, might find opportunity to repair the loss at night. May we not, in the present day, at least bestow a passing sigh over the retrograde steps we have taken since those days when men did not esteem time wasted which was spent in the service of God.

But the bishop was perhaps over-hasty in his reformation. After a long and gradual decay, it is dangerous too rapidly to renovate. Those of the clergy whose hearts were not really in their work,

disliked these amendments not a little, and endeavoured to poison the minds of the people against their new ruler. But the people rather judged from what they saw, than from these dissatisfied insinuations, and finding their bishop's life "unblameable, his zeal impartial, his doctrine sound, his sermons eloquent,"* they clung to him with respect and admiration.

When, however, he turned his reproofs and corrections upon the rich and noble, and rebuked their extravagant luxury and their unseemly pride, he raised up enemies amongst them likewise. The episcopal functions did not prevent Chrysostom from continuing those homilies, which seemed so peculiarly his element—while yet he was always willing and ready to give ghostly counsel and advice in private, to any, whether high or low, who sought for it.

Frequently did he repeat to them, both in public and private, that he was not contented with external observances, however exact, all of which might have their origin in mere habit, vanity, or other worldly motives. They might attend all the daily services, listen eagerly to his preaching, watch and fast, and quote Scripture; but unless all these were to serve as means whereby to arrive at real piety and purity

* Cave.

of heart, he esteemed them as worthless. And the more the rich winced under the lash of his faithful discipline, the more earnestly St. Chrysostom strove to convince them that the kingdom of heaven must be approached by the narrow path of lowliness and suffering. It was with all the pathetic tenderness of a fond father that he besought his people to hearken whilst it was time ; and he seems to have been ready to say with Moses : "Blot me out of Thy Book," but save these my people. Often his language is soothing and gentle, and such passages as the following frequently occur : "You weary, it may be, of my reproofs—for rather truly would I commend you. Live then so that I may do so. Perish not, and I will not weep. How ? When you behold the dead, you pour forth your tears ; and would you have me behold your souls perishing, and yet weep not ? It cannot be. Am not I your father ?"*

St. Chrysostom's labours appear immense, particularly when we remember that his frame was weak—that he suffered alike from cold and heat, and that he was subject to constant attacks of severe illness. Yet he attended to all the affairs of the episcopate himself, and personally watched over the widows, the virgins, the sick, and the prisoners under his rule. Nor did he neglect the study of the Scriptures,

* Hom. Heb.

in which he would often become so deeply absorbed as to forget his needful nourishment. Indeed at all times this was a matter of little import to him, he barely took enough for his support, never touching wine except medicinally; he always dined alone, neither partaking of other men's hospitality, nor affording, as his predecessor had done, princely banquets to the great and noble; esteeming them unnecessary for a successor of the Apostles. Yet from his pleading his own bodily infirmities, the great demands upon his time, and the difficulty of receiving and shewing civilities without frequently causing jealousies and offence, we may conclude he would not condemn those prelates who acted differently.

Still this total want of show and splendour gave offence to many, whose memories dwelt upon the pomp and grandeur with which Nectarius had enlivened Constantinople. Perhaps it would have been better had St. Chrysostom adopted more of a middle course; for by so universally avoiding all society, he must have missed many opportunities of bestowing instruction and counsel, especially upon the young, who, won by his golden lips, would perhaps have grown up around him, a generation formed and taught after his own heart.*

* Among his immediate disciples and pupils are numbered St. Nilus, Isidore of Pelusa, and Theodoret, Bishop of Cyr.

One of St. Chrysostom's reformatiions which gained general approval, was in the Church psalmody, which he took great pains in rendering pure and perfect ; day and night rose these holy strains, and his arrangements for these services existed long after his death.

In the year 399, a political commotion occurred in Constantinople—the people rose against Eutropius, the low-born and pampered favorite of the emperor, and would have murdered him, had he not sought refuge in the church, knowing that there he should meet with good for evil, and that the prelate whom he had often injured would now be his only hope.*

Nor was he mistaken—Chrysostom received him, and when the mob came with the imperial officers to drag him from his asylum, the bishop presented himself to meet them, and after having somewhat calmed their fury, addressed both the people and their victim ; shewing the latter the uncertainty of all human greatness, and urging the former to imitate Him Who is kind to the unthankful and to

* Some historians relate that Eutropius had induced Arcadius to pass a law depriving the Church of her power to afford an inviolable asylum, and empowering the officers of justice to drag those who sought the protection of it even from the very altar.

the evil, and to cease from their revenge. Nor was his eloquence wasted—the populace retired, and Chrysostom persuaded Arcadius to spare Eutropius' life, and only banish him to Cyprus. Subsequently however he was beheaded.

A new struggle commenced shortly afterwards. The usurper Gainas, by birth a Goth, who from a common soldier in the Roman army had risen to be general, intoxicated by his good fortune, overran the empire with his lawless bands ; and the weak Arcadius, fearing to encounter him, strengthened him, by making sundry unwise concessions. At last in a personal interview, Gainas demanded of the emperor a church in Constantinople for the Arian sect, to which he belonged; and the monarch anxious to conciliate his formidable foe, requested of St. Chrysostom that he would allow this to be done.

But he met with a decided and peremptory refusal ; and the bishop meeting the rebel, completely overawed him, and for the moment silenced him. Gainas thereupon left Constantinople ; and in the beginning of the year 401, fell in an engagement with the Huns, and his head was sent as an offering to Arcadius.*

St. Chrysostom's next troubles arose from Theophilus of Alexandria, who had quarrelled with a number of his clergy ; they appealed to the bishop

* Gibbon.

of Constantinople, who after some labour reconciled the adverse parties.

Many tedious and vexatious proceedings likewise took place in respect to several prelates accused of various misdemeanours, which gave St. Chrysostom not a little annoyance and pain ; and immediately after the departure of Gainas, he journeyed to Ephesus, where his presence was earnestly desired, that Church being in a lamentable state of disorder. His measures were peremptory and severe ; he deposed six bishops, and thereby raised to himself not a few enemies.

CHAPTER V.

When persecution's torrent-blaze
Wraps the unshrinking martyr's head;
When fade all earthly flowers and bays,
When summer friends are gone and fled,
Is he alone in that dark hour
Who owns the Lord of love and power?

Or waves there not around his brow,
A wand no human arm may wield,
Fraught with a spell no angels know,
His steps to guide—his soul to shield?
Thou, Saviour, art his charmed Bower,
His magic Ring, his Rock, his Tower.

KEBLE.

BEGINNING OF CHRYSOSTOM'S PERSECUTIONS—THE EMPRESS
EUDOXIA—COUNCIL OF THE OAK—CHRYSOSTOM EXHORTS
HIS CLERGY—IS CONDEMNED—AND BANISHED—INDIGNA-
TION OF THE PEOPLE—EARTHQUAKE—HE IS RECALLED—
EUDOXIA'S WRATH REVIVES—ARCADIUS DEPOSES CHRYSOS-
TOM—POPULAR TUMULTS—HE SURRENDERS—CONFLAGRA-
TION—PERSECUTION OF HIS FRIENDS.

MEANWHILE a storm was gathering over the saint's head. During his absence at Ephesus, he had committed great trust to Severianus, bishop of Gabala, and Antiochus, bishop of Ptolemais, which they

wickedly abused ; endeavouring to foster an unfavourable feeling towards the absent prelate in all quarters where it was possible, especially with the empress Eudoxia, a woman of haughty and revengeful temper, who exercised unlimited sway over Arcadius. St. Chrysostom's reproofs to the ladies of Constantinople for their vanity and frivolous looseness of manners, were probably intended to include the empress, and by some it is said that he had personally reproved her for her overbearing pride and injustice. And on Eudoxia having acted with great tyranny and oppression in the matter of a vineyard, the property of a widow, it was reported to her that Chrysostom had compared her to Jezebel. Whether he had really done so, or not, we cannot tell,—his temper was quick, and in a moment of irritation some such expression may have escaped him ; but at all events the conscience of the empress would whisper to her the justice of the comparison, and her wrath was violent. Eudoxia entered into league with St. Chrysostom's old enemy, Theophilus of Alexandria, who came to Constantinople, and rudely neglecting the bishop's proffered hospitality, took up his abode in one of the imperial houses, prepared for him at the desire of the empress.

In the year 463, a council was called at Chalcedon, which is generally known as the Council of the Oak, from a remarkably fine tree which grew there, and

here a considerable number of prelates assembled, mostly the avowed enemies of Chrysostom, under the open influence of Theophilus. As principal accuser against him, was one John, a deacon under his own immediate authority, whom for some offence he had disgraced, and whose degradation made one among the twenty-nine articles of accusation brought against him, all of which were most false and unfounded.

Chrysostom refused to appear before this self-constituted tribunal; but being well aware of its probable result, he summoned all the bishops of his party then in Constantinople (about forty in number), and addressed them thus:—"Brothers, be earnest in prayer, and as you love our Lord Jesus, let none of you for my sake desert his charge: for, as St. Paul, I say, 'I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.' Many hardships I see I must undergo, and then quit this troublesome life. May you find mercy at the hands of God; only be mindful of me in your prayers."

The agitation of his hearers was excessive: many burst into tears—some kissed his revered hand; whilst others, unable to control themselves, left the assembly.

Chrysostom continued: "Calm yourselves, my brethren, and cease to weep, lest you add affliction to my grief. To me to live is Christ, and to die is

gain. Have I not often told you, that in this life, both joys and sorrows pass rapidly away? Are we better than the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles, and did not they suffer tribulation?"

Here some one broke forth into bitter lamentations at the desolate condition in which they should be left; the Church a widow, and open to the pride and covetousness of ungodly men, who would tyrannize over her; the poor losing their guardian, and the Catholic doctrine its champion.

Seriously and meekly Chrysostom bade him forbear. "The doctrine of Christ," he said, "did not begin with me, neither shall it end with me. Did not Moses die, and did not Joshua succeed him? Did not Samuel die, and was not David anointed in his stead? Elias was taken up into heaven, and did not his spirit rest upon Elisha? Paul was beheaded, and left he not Timothy, Titus, and many more behind him?"*

The Bishop of Apamea replied, that if they remained in their sees, they would be forced to communicate and to subscribe; to which he answered, that they ought to communicate, that no schism might arise through them in the Church; but that believing him innocent, they ought not to subscribe his condemnation.

While they were yet assembled, two Libyan

* Cave.

bishops arrived with a new summons to attend the council, which was again rejected ; and at last, finding that Chrysostom would never admit their authority, and pressed by the court to give sentence, Theophilus and his creatures condemned the Bishop of Constantinople to be deposed and exiled.

The fury of the people was boundless, and they would have risen in a mass and defended their spiritual father, had he not, anxious to prevent bloodshed and insurrection, surrendered himself privately to the officers, who conveyed him by night to the shores of the Bosphorus, and there embarking, carried him to Prænetum, in Bithynia.

Theophilus gave way to his triumph over his fallen foe, and persecuted those who were so justly irritated at his banishment.

A gloomy, ill-boding silence reigned among the people. The second night after the bishop's banishment a terrible earthquake shook the city,—all men esteemed it as a sign of God's special wrath at the unjust sentence, and the Empress Eudoxia, in a transport of fear and terror, knelt to Arcadius to intreat him to revoke it. The emperor consented, and thereupon she dispatched one of her own officers to St. Chrysostom. He bore a contrite and humble letter, protesting that she had had no hand in his banishment, professing her deep reverence and obedience towards him, and beseeching him speedily to

return. "The voice of the people and the Voice of God seemed to join in the vindication of Chrysostom," says a modern author.*

The people hastened to meet their restored saint, forming a triumphal procession, bearing torches and chanting hymns of joy; and he, landing at a small village near the mouth of the Bosphorus, met them, and was conducted in triumph to the cathedral, where he bestowed the patriarchal blessing upon them.

Theophilus fled discomfited, but just in time; for the people sought him, intending to throw him into the sea.

But Eudoxia's fears had now subsided, and her hatred of the exemplary bishop revived, and she shortly found a pretext for venting it, on the occasion of the erection of a silver statue of herself. This was placed upon a porphyry column, immediately in front of the great church of St. Sophia, and a scene of profligacy and debauchery attended its inauguration, to the great disturbance of the congregation.

St. Chrysostom spoke warmly against these proceedings, and his words were repeated (losing, we may be sure, none of their severity), to Eudoxia; and again calling in the aid of Theophilus, this wicked woman persuaded the despicable Arcadius to sus-

* Milman.

pend the bishop from his functions. Chrysostom replied,—“I have received my Church from God, and am entrusted with the care of this people’s souls, and I cannot desert my charge. If by the strong hand of civil power you force me to leave it, I am no longer answerable.”

On Good Friday he received another imperial message, to which he gave no reply. Forty bishops besought the emperor with tears not to deprive the Church of Christ of so great a champion, especially at this season of Easter; but their intreaties were contemptuously rejected. One amongst them, Paul, Bishop of Croatia, turned to the empress and exclaimed: “Eudoxia, fear God, and for the sake of thy offspring, profane not Christ’s holy festival with injustice.”

Still the feeling of the multitude was so completely in favour of the persecuted patriarch, that his enemies shrunk from executing the sentence of deposition; yet the imperial soldiers burst into the church of St. Sophia, and committed the most horrible profanities; spilling the consecrated wine, and wounding and killing the worshippers, until the font of pure water, prepared for the baptism of the numerous catechumens who at this season of the year were accustomed to offer themselves, was dyed red, and many of the candidates for baptism received the holy regenerating rite in their own blood. (A.D. 404.)

In this fearful state of trouble and confusion the city continued for some short space, until the innocent cause of so many horrors determined no longer to excite confusion in his beloved Church;—and calling together his most trusted friends, amongst whom was Olympias, a noble widow, who had been to him an unshaken follower, told them of his resolution. “The things that concern me have an end. I have finished my course, and perhaps ye shall see my face no more. But I would earnestly intreat that none of you will decrease your accustomed care and diligence towards the Church. Submit to my lawful successor as to myself—for the Church cannot be without a bishop—so shall ye obtain mercy of God; and be mindful of me in your prayers.”

In silent and heartfelt grief they threw themselves at his feet, and took leave of their beloved father, who for so many years had won their affection and respect.

St. Chrysostom had given orders that his horse should be led to the west entrance of the church, and there the people waited, expecting him to issue forth; but he departed by another door, his heart filled with a calm spirit of resignation and trust, and saying within himself (according to his own account): “Will the empress banish me? let her do so—the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof. Will she throw me into the sea? Such was the fate of

Jonas. Or into the fiery furnace? I shall have the three children for my fellow-sufferers. If she cast me to wild beasts, I will remember how Daniel was cast to the lions. If she command to stone me—then have I St. Stephen at my side. Will she have my head? Let her take it: John Baptist lost his. Will she take my estate? Let her do so: ‘Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I return out of it.’” And he surrendered himself to the imperial officers.

Meanwhile the people grew impatient, and entering the church found not their bishop; but immediately a fierce fire arose therein, which no human power could arrest, and the whole of that noble building was consumed, except the vestry where the communion plate and holy vessels were kept. The senate house shared in the conflagration, and the imperial palace seems to have stood in some peril. All night long the fire raged fiercely. Of course this remarkable event was ascribed to various causes. The bishop’s enemies affirming, some that he himself had set fire to the church—others that his followers had done so, with the design of preventing any other prelate from ever occupying his patriarchal throne; while the more general belief was that it was no mortal work, but that God had sent the conflagration to punish the sins of the city, and the unjust banishment of His holy minister.

An old, almost imbecile man was thrust into the see,* and all the friends of the late bishop were treated with the utmost severity, amongst them Olympias, whose beauty and wealth exposed her to the attention of the emperor and his courtiers, and who steadily refusing to contract a marriage with one of these, was banished, and retired to Nicomedia, in Bithynia, whence she continued a correspondence with her beloved master as long as he lived, and afterwards died there herself.

Every one who received into his house any person who communicated with Chrysostom, incurred forfeiture of his possessions, and it became a matter of danger even to pronounce his name.

* Arsacius, brother to Nectarius, Chrysostom's predecessor.

CHAPTER VI.

A sea before
The throne is spread ; its pure, still glass
Pictures all earth-scenes as they pass.
We on its shore
Share in the bosom of our rest
God's knowledge, and are blest.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM'S EXILE—PAUSES AT CÆSAREA—ARRIVES AT
CUCUSUS—HIS EMPLOYMENT THERE—STARTS FOR PITYUS
—STOPS AT ST. BASILISCUS' SHRINE—AND THERE DIES.

As soon as St. Chrysostom had delivered himself up to the imperial officers, they put him on board a small vessel and conveyed him with several of his clergy to a small village in Bithynia ; the latter were soon dismissed in freedom, but the bishop was removed into far more distant exile. His first destination was Sebastea, but that was altered, and he was banished to Cucusus, a small wretched town in the most savage and mountainous part of Armenia ; its soil barren, and its climate sharp and unhealthy, and exposed to the continual inroads of banditti.

Here the implacable foes of the meek and patient sufferer hoped that between the effects of bodily anguish and mental pangs, he would perish.

The journey was a most severe trial to him, from his habitual delicacy of constitution, and the degree to which he was affected by the heat of the noonday sun, by the insufficient rest allowed him at night, and the total deficiency of all that might alleviate a sick man's condition. Arriving, however, at Cæsarea in Cappadocia, he was permitted some repose, which with the assistance of skilful physicians, a more suitable diet, and the use of the bath (one of the few luxuries in which he had habitually indulged) in some measure restored his decaying strength.

At Cæsarea, Chrysostom was visited by persons of the highest rank, as well as the poor and lowly, who all regarded him as a martyr, and sought, if it were possible, to soften his woes by the demonstration of their respect and veneration.

But he was not suffered to remain here, and soon the weary journey towards Cucusus was recommenced; at the end of two months he arrived there, and found greater kindness than he had anticipated; all the inhabitants seeking to serve him in any possible way, and to procure him every alleviation in their power. Neither did the climate prove so injurious to his health as he had anticipated, while, to use the words of Gibbon, his active mind was in-

vigorated by misfortune and still independent, though his body was captive.

There was great consolation, too, in being able yet to exert himself in his Master's cause. He still preached to those about him. But this was the least of his labours. "The Eastern Church," says Milman, "was almost governed from the solitary cell of Chrysostom. He corresponded with all quarters; women of rank and opulence sought his solitude in disguise; the bishops of many distant sees sent him assistance and coveted his advice; the Bishop of Rome received his letters with respect, and wrote back ardent commendations of his patience. The exile of Cucusus exercised perhaps more extensive authority than the Patriarch of Constantinople.

But soon winter came on, and his bodily infirmities increased. All his old ailments, of cough, headache, and want of sleep, returned, and brought him very near to the grave. As spring advanced he was removed still further amongst the mountains. to avoid the barbarians, who threatened Cucusus.

"Near to Charliqieu, a town in Armenia," we are told, "there arises in the midst of a plain, a vast rock, upon the north side whereof you ascend nine or ten steps into a chamber, with a bed, a table, and cupboard in it, hewn out of the rock; and beyond, a little gallery. The tradition of the Christians of that place affirms that St. Chrysostom made this

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rock his retiring place, where they shew the print of a man's body."*

At length an order came for his removal to Pityus on the Euxine, and his jailors commenced the journey, dragging the dying prelate with them, nor heeding his great sufferings. Exposed to a fierce sun, alternately with drenching rain, his exhausted frame sank, and when they reached a little chapel on the roadside, dedicated to the martyr St. Basiliscus, his guardians were forced to carry him in thither, and they laid him within the priest's oratory. Here, during the night, he had a vision of the holy martyr, who appeared at his side, saying,—“Be of good courage, brother, to-morrow we shall be together.” The dying saint was greatly cheered by this vision, and would fain have died there in peace; his merciless jailors, however, forced him to proceed, but were shortly obliged to convey him back to the oratory. Returned there, he caused himself to be arrayed in his white episcopal robes, and being now in the extreme agony, he received the holy Eucharist, and saying fervently—“Glory be to God for all things. Amen,” his almost palsied fingers once more traced the sign of the Emblem of Salvation, and here signed his soul to the God who gave it, on the day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, A.D.

* Cave.

407, in about the fifty-fourth year of his age, and the ninth after his episcopal consecration.

Thus perished he of the Golden Mouth—a mouth which one might almost say was never opened save for the glory of Him Who had endowed it with such matchless eloquence. Words of ours can add but little to the testimony of his life, and a highly wrought eulogium would seem ill-placed.

Thus saints, that seem to die in earth's rude strife,

Only win double life:

They have but left our weary ways

To live in memory here; in heaven by love and praise.

Little remains now to be added ; the saint was borne—a victorious champion over the world and sin—to his tomb ; and laid by the side of St. Basiliscus. Great grief was felt by all true Christians when it was known that the world had lost so illustrious a man and so faithful a bishop ; and Innocent, bishop of Rome, excommunicated Arcadius and Eudoxia as the wicked instruments of his loss. Honorius, emperor of the West, likewise reproached his brother with his weak submission to his proud wife, and Arcadius, always easy to be swayed either for good or evil, expressed deep contrition, and confessing his guilt with due penitence to Innocent, he thereupon gave him absolution.

His persecutors did not long enjoy the fruits of their triumph. Whether God's hand chastises in this world the sins of the wicked, or whether in some cases, He leaves it to the next world, we will not pronounce ; but it is remarkable that Eudoxia, who was the principal instrument of all St. Chrysostom's sufferings, and eventually of his death, only three months afterwards died in child-birth. Theophilus also, who was so wickedly associated with Eudoxia, is said to have repented, and to have done homage to St. Chrysostom's memory, before his death.

Theodosius the younger, a godson of Chrysostom's, removed the remains of his sainted sponsor to Constantinople, and accompanied by his sisters proceeded to the church of St. Irene, where the coffin was placed, and kneeling beside it, bent his head thereon, deeply lamenting the wrong done to the holy man by his parents. The coffin was lowered into a vault in front of the holy Altar by episcopal hands. This was on January 27, 438.

ST. JEROME.

The peaceful star of Bethlehem
Came o'er thy solitude,
The radiance of that heavenly gem
Lit up thy sterner mood:
Yea, like a star in murky wells,
Cheering the bed where darkness dwells,
The images of earth its happier light imbued.

The thought of the Eternal Child
Upon thy cloistral cell
Must sure have cast an influence mild,
And, like an holy spell,
Have peopled that fair eastern night
With dreams meet for an eremite
Beside that cradle poor bidding the world farewell.

THE CATHEDRAL.



LIFE OF ST. JEROME.

CHAPTER I.

From his cradle
He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one,
Exceeding wise, fair spoken and persuading :
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,
But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.

HENRY VIII. ACT IV. SCENE 2.

CHARACTER OF ST. JEROME—HIS BIRTH—EDUCATION—HIS TRAVELS—IS BAPTISED—GOES TO AQUILEIA—VISITS THE EAST—APOLLINARIS—RETIRES TO THE DESERT OF CHALCIS—HIS INTERNAL CONFLICTS—STUDIES HEBREW AND CHALDEE—ABANDONS HIS CLASSIC STUDIES.

It must be acknowledged that in turning to the history of St. Jerome, we do not find the same gratification and delight as in tracing the saintly, meek, though stedfast career of St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom, or the other Fathers of the Church, about whom we have been inquiring. There is something in his untempered austerity, and the harshness

which (if we may thus speak of a saint), seems occasionally wanting in Christian charity ; that rather keeps us at a distance from St. Jerome—whereas we feel irresistibly drawn to the others by their benevolent and affectionate long-suffering.

But we should be wrong for this reason to turn from the study of his history, for much instruction may be derived from it; we may thence learn that even saints whose lives are devoted to God's service, are not exempt from the evil nature which is born with us—and that therefore we should not despair at finding ourselves oppressed with temptations and sins ; but rather imitate their examples, in striving earnestly against them. St. Jerome did strive against his besetting sins, which arose principally from a heat of disposition, by which he was often led to express himself rather in the language of an angry partizan, than that becoming a Christian and a priest. "He was not free from the common fault," says Tillemont,* "of becoming prejudiced against those of whom he spoke; and had not the liberal mind of St. Augustine, which discerned, even in the most wicked men, wherein lay their good points distinct from those worthy of condemnation. He has been accused of being proud of his eloquence, and of estranging his friends by his envious captious

* Vie de St. Jerome.

spirit. And it must be confessed that his disposition had a bitterness in it, far from conciliatory—easily taking offence, and when offended not placable.”

But St. Jerome sought earnestly to conquer these faults; and in his absolute renunciation of the world, and all his possessions, which he devoted to the service of the Church, we find ample proof of his sincerity. And surely there was true humility in his extreme reluctance to receive holy orders, not from any disinclination for the ministerial labours, but because he judged himself unworthy of so high an office.

St. Jerome has been called “the connecting link between the East and the West.”* Educated at Rome, and a Latin by early association, he carried into the East that vigour and energy which seems congenial to the West, and, when settled in Judæa, he aroused both East and West by his powerful and voluminous writings. “Jerome was, no doubt,” says Milman, “the most influential pilgrim to the Holy Land; the increasing and general desire to visit the soil printed, as it were, with the footsteps, and moist with the redeeming Blood of the Saviour, may be traced to his writings, which opened, as it were, a constant and easy communication, and established an intercourse, more or less regularly maintained,

* Milman.

between Western Europe and Palestine." His influence, likewise, drew numbers to the monastic system, which was gaining daily in esteem and popularity; and his version of the Scriptures was one of the most important incidents of the period.

Let us, then, whilst we deplore the occasional violence and intemperance of St. Jerome's character, inquire whether our own meekness and self-abnegation are so great as to entitle us to judge hardly of one esteemed by the Church as a Saint.

St. Jerome was born, about A.D. 329, at Stridonium (in modern times called Sidrigni), a little town on the borders of Pannonia, and near to Aquileia. His father, Eusebius, was a man of good family, and possessed of considerable wealth. We find mention only of one brother, Paulinian, who was considerably younger than Jerome, and a sister.

St. Jerome's parents were christians, and he gloried in the fact that from the cradle he had held the pure Catholic faith, untainted by heresies. Eusebius was desirous that his son should receive a learned education, which probably commenced at an early age, as he was torn from the arms of a doting grandmother, and consigned to a rigid tutor.

He was still but a boy when Eusebius sent him to Rome, the great school of learning in the West. Here Jerome became a disciple of Donatus, the celebrated grammarian, and of Victorinus the rhe-

torician. He devoted himself with great ardour to literary studies; declamation, logic, and philosophy; and mentions that he constantly went into court to hear the most celebrated advocates plead: by some it is supposed that Jerome himself for a time pleaded at the bar, but this is doubtful. He also speaks of his habit of resorting on Sundays to the catacombs. "When a boy, I studied the liberal arts at Rome, I was wont to make a round to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs; with others of the same age and inclinations, and often to descend into the caves which are dug deep into the earth, and have for walls, on each side, the bodies of those that are interred there."* Left at Rome to his own guidance when not in the schools, Jerome fell, if not into absolutely vicious courses, at all events into a careless and indifferent habit of life; making pleasure his principal occupation, either in sensual or literary pursuits. His great delight had been in collecting together a good library, and his father's wealth probably afforded him ample means for indulging this taste, nor did he spare his own labour, frequently copying rare works, and studying them with such avidity as to forget to take his needful nourishment. At this time Jerome's favorite authors were Cicero and Plautus.

When he had completed his studies at Rome,

* Butler.

Jerome, together with his friend and fellow-student Bonosius, resolved to extend their knowledge of mankind, by travelling; and accordingly went into Gaul, and spent some time at Marseilles, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyons, and Triers, at that time a place especially famous for its schools, which had been patronized by the Emperor Gratian.

While living at Triers, Jerome became alive to the errors of his scholastic life, and made an earnest resolution to devote himself to God, and to abandon his worldly pleasures and habits; while he turned his literary ardour into a new channel, seeking eagerly to acquire sacred lore, and copying with his own hands St. Hilary's commentary on the Psalms and his work on Synods.

While thus engaged, Jerome came to the determination of adopting the solitary life; and without much difficulty induced his friend Bonosius to do so likewise.

From Triers, Jerome repaired to Rome, where he says, that he "put on the garment of Christ," in other words that he received holy Baptism; probably from the hands of Liberius, bishop of Rome.

This important event over, Jerome went to Aquileia, which was famous for the number of eminent men, both priests and laymen there assembled. The monastery at Aquileia has been considered as the first established in Italy, and it is at least

certain that the monastic system was there introduced by St. Athanasius during the period of his exile.

Here Jerome lived in constant intimacy with St. Chromatius, Heliodorus, afterwards bishop of Antino, and many others, whose names are noted in ecclesiastical history. It was here likewise that he became the friend of Rufinus, with whom he was most closely allied for many years, until that fatal disturber of peace and friendship—controversy—broke their bonds, and turned their affection into bitter enmity.

While studying at Aquileia, Jerome was suddenly called to his native city, by the distress brought upon his family through the misconduct of his only sister. The earnest efforts of Jerome led her to repentance; but he probably sojourned but a short time at Stridonium, as he speaks of committing the guidance of her penitence to the deacon Julian, who perfected the work Jerome had begun.

However he had now come to the conclusion that neither Rome nor Aquileia were suitable places for the life he wished to lead; he resolved to abandon, for Christ's sake, father and mother, friends, and all the luxuries to which he was accustomed; yet he did not carry his resolution into effect without many and sore struggles: when speaking of another who was making a similar effort, he says, "I am

well aware of the strength of these ties, I have neither a heart of stone, nor bowels of iron, nor was I nursed up among tigers and leopards—I myself have passed through that struggle.”

Nevertheless he left Italy, and travelled through Thrace, the Pontus and Bithynia, pausing for some time at Antioch, where at that time (A.D. 374) Apollinaris was much run after for his eloquent preaching. His heretical doctrines were yet unbroached; indeed, until after the death of St. Athanasius, Apollinaris was a vigorous champion of Catholicity, and he had both written and preached against the Arians, Manichees, Origenites, and some other sectarians who disturbed the Church's peace.*

But Jerome found Antioch no better suited for his abode than the cities of the west. His ardent and passionate mind longed for the total solitude of the desert, and in the tumult of the town he was not happy. He wrote some commentaries on the prophecies, at Antioch, speaking of which years afterwards, he says, “Because I was versed in literature, I thought to understand Scripture. Surely it was folly. Lo the elders† and the beasts who were full of eyes within and without, fell down before the throne of the Lamb to avow their ignorance, and I, who had not the Spirit of God, thought

* Apollinaris did not openly separate from the Church until 376.

† Revelations iv.

to speak of His things—though I could not say with David, ‘Thy Word hath quickened me,’ I had not received the Circumcision of the Spirit—and yet I dared to present myself before the Lord as His messenger.”*

At Antioch Jerome enjoyed the society of his dear friend Heliodorus, but the latter was called away to watch over a widowed sister and her orphan son, and Jerome, who was suffering under an illness which deprived him of all bodily strength, and likewise produced an overwhelming languor and depression of mind, sorrowed grievously at the parting, thinking himself near to death, and that he should see his friend no more.

Shortly afterwards, (A.D. 374), Jerome left Antioch for the desert of Chalcis, a wild frightful place, but already selected as a retreat by various holy men, of whom St. Jerome says that he had seen some who had not for thirty years left their cell, living on barley bread and water. “But,” he says, “we change our abode, we cross the sea, without changing our spirit. The enemy quits me not—he follows me everywhere; and I fight a fiercer battle in the desert than elsewhere.”†

* Tillemont.

† “In life’s long sickness evermore,
Our thoughts are tossing to and fro,
We change our posture o’er and o’er,
But cannot rest, or cheat our woe.”

Innocent and Hylas, two faithful friends of St. Jerome, accompanied him to the desert, but very soon the former died in a violent attack of fever, nor did Hylas long survive him, so that Jerome was left to the society of the beasts of the desert, and here, in addition to severe bodily illness, his conflicts of mind seem to have been fearful. We give his own words :—

“ In the remotest part of a wild and sharp desert, which being burnt up with the heats of a scorching sun, strikes with horror and terror even the monks who inhabit it, I still dwelt upon the delights and luxuries of Rome. I loved solitude, that in the bitterness of my soul, I might more freely bewail my miseries, and call upon my Saviour. My hideous mis-shapen limbs were covered with sackcloth, my skin was parched, dry, and black, and my flesh was almost wasted away. The days I passed in tears and groans, and when sleep overpowered me against my will, I cast my wearied bones, which hardly hung together, upon the bare ground, which was rather a torture than a rest. I say nothing of my food or beverage : the monks of that desert even when sick, drink nothing but water, and look upon it as sensual to eat anything dressed by fire.” Yet in this horrid condition, thoughts and emotions of the world and of pleasure haunted and distracted him.

“Destitute of all succour, I threw myself in spirit at the Feet of Jesus, watering them with my tears, and taming my flesh by fasting for weeks. I often joined whole nights to the days, crying, sighing, and beating my breast till the desired calm returned. I feared the very cell in which I lived, because it was witness to the foul suggestions of my enemy ; and being angry, and armed with severity against myself, I went alone into the most secret paths of the wilderness, and if I discovered anywhere a deep valley or a craggy rock, that was the place of my prayer, there I threw my miserable body. The Lord is my witness, that after so many sobs and tears, after having in much sorrow looked long up to heaven, I felt most delightful comforts and interior sweetness ; and these so great, that transported and absorbed, I seemed to myself to be among the choirs of angels ; and glad and joyful I sang to God :— ‘Because of the savour of Thy good ointments, I will run after Thee.’”*

As a new weapon against the enemy, Jerome took up the study of Hebrew. “When my soul was on fire with bad thoughts, that I might subdue the flesh, I became scholar to a monk who had been a Jew, to learn of him the Hebrew alphabet ; and after I had most diligently studied the admirable

* Butler.

rules of Quintillian, the copiously-flowing eloquence of Cicero, the majesty of Fronto, and the smooth periods of Pliny, I turned to a language whose words are so rude and hard of pronunciation. None but myself, and those who were present with me, can conceive what labour, what difficulty, I experienced; how often I ceased, despairing ever to succeed, and how many times after giving up my efforts, I recommenced with new ardour. And I thank our Lord, that I now gather sweet fruit from the bitter seed of those studies."

How valuable these studies were in enabling Jerome to translate the Scriptures, we need scarcely pause to remark.

Nor was Hebrew the only difficult pursuit he undertook. In order to the better understanding of the prophet Daniel, Jerome applied himself to the Chaldaic tongue, and found it even more wearisome than Hebrew, so that he was on the point of giving it up in despair, when a Chaldean urged him to persevere, saying that indefatigable energy conquered all difficulties. Jerome says, however, that he never attained the Chaldaic pronunciation, although he could read and understand it with facility.

As a relaxation, when wearied with his austere mode of life, and his dry studies, Jerome resorted to his favourite classic authors, whom he had brought with him even to the desert. "Wretch that I

was," he says, "I fasted, and then read Cicero. After passing sleepless nights, after shedding the bitter tears, which, conscious of my guilt, were forced from my very inmost soul—I turned to Plautus. And if, in self-reproach, I took the Prophets, their simple, unaffected style displeased me. And because in my blindness I could not see the light, I imputed the fault to the sun, and not to my own eyes."*

Matters stood thus when St. Jerome had a severe attack of fever, in which he lay some time as one dead, so that even preparations were made for burying him. But during this time he had a dream or vision. "I stood before the Judge's tribunal; the light thereof was so dazzling, that unable to bear it, I prostrated myself on the earth and dared not raise my head. Then was it asked of me what I was. I replied that I was a Christian. 'Thou liest,' answered the Judge, 'thou art a Ciceronian and not a Christian; where the treasure is, there will the heart be also! I was speechless. Then He commanded the angels to scourge me—but my conscience tortures me far more grievously, and I repeated in my heart the words of the psalm, 'Who shall give Thee thanks in the pit?'"

At last he was released, solemnly promising no more to cling to his profane studies. "And from

* Tillemont.

that time," he says, "I gave myself to the reading of divine things with greater diligence and attention than I had ever read other authors."

In his commentary upon Daniel, written about 407, he apologizes for quoting profane writers, saying, "If from time to time we are constrained to use the wisdom of the world, and renew the memory of things we had long laid aside, let it not be attributed to inclination, but rather to necessity."

Jerome was disappointed of the promised society of Heliodorus, who besides the paternal care he bestowed upon his nephew Nepotian, had likewise received holy orders, and was engaged in serving his Master in the active rather than the contemplative life.

Rufinus, then a valued friend, came into the neighbourhood, and Jerome would fain have gone to see him, but sickness hindered him; so that he could only express his regard by means of a letter, in which he remarks, that "the friendship which can ever cease, has never really existed."

CHAPTER II.

And if the world sin on, yet here and there
Some proud soul cowers, some scorner learns to pray ;
Some slumberer rouses at the beacon glare,
And trims his waning lamp, and waits for day.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH—JEROME QUILTS THE DESERT—
IS ORDAINED—TRAVELS—GOES TO ROME—HIS REPUTATION
THERE—ST. ASELLA — ST. MARCELLA—ST. PAULA — BLE-
SILLA — JEROME TRAVELS IN THE EAST—SETTLES AT
BETHLEHEM—HIS OCCUPATIONS — PAULA SETTLES THERE
LIKEWISE—JEROME WRITES AGAINST JOVINIAN—NEPOTIAN
—HERESY OF VIGILANTIUS.

MEANWHILE the Church was very far from enjoying peace or repose. Schism and heresy were spreading on all sides, and rallying multitudes of misguided men around their standards. Nor did Jerome in his desert escape from the disquietude which afflicted the faithful. "Would to God," he writes to the pope Damasus, "that all the infidels would rise up together against me, for having defended the glory and the name of the Lord ! I care not though the whole world conspired in blaming my conduct, if I

may but obtain the approbation of Jesus Christ. You are deceived, if you think that a Christian can live without persecution. He suffers the greatest who lives under none. Nothing is more to be feared than too long a peace. A storm puts a man upon his guard, and obliges him to exert his utmost efforts to escape reproach."

Antioch especially was in a miserably divided state, for there the episcopal succession was in dispute ; one party holding to Meletius, and the other to Paulinus, as true and orthodox bishop ; and throughout the whole Church a dispute existed on the subject of the *hypostasis*—a dispute fostered by the ambiguous meaning of the word, which one party employed in the signification of *nature* ; the other of *person* or *substance* : and, of course, this diversity of meaning excluded any common ground for agreement.

The anchorites of Chalcis importuned Jerome to take part in these arguments ; and he, unwilling to rest upon his own responsibility, wrote to consult Damasus, protesting that he knew nothing of the rival bishops, and that as to the question of the word *hypostasis*—if it signified *nature*, there could be but One in the Holy Trinity ; if *person*, there were assuredly Three. And in a second letter, he says, "On one side, the Arian fury rages, supported by the secular power : on the other side, the Church

at Antioch being divided into three parts, each would needs draw me unto itself. All the time I cease not to cry out, that whoso is in communion with you, is likewise with me.”*

At last, worn out with the contentions and vexations which penetrated even among the monks of the desert, Jerome abandoned the scene of his conflicts, yet apparently not without pain and regret. However, he returned to Antioch, and there Damasus having indicated Paulinus as the bishop with whom he should hold communion, Jerome received ordination from his hands, but with the express stipulation, that he might continue to lead the monastic life, which he so greatly preferred. After this, Jerome travelled from place to place ; for a time he was at Constantinople, during the episcopate of the learned and engaging Gregory Nazianzen, under whom he studied the Scriptures ; and he frequently congratulated himself on having had so eminent and gifted a saint as his master, teacher, and catechist. Here too he met with Gregory of Nyssa. Afterwards we find him at Jerusalem, where he diligently studied both the Hebrew language and the geographical history of the country, and astonished the Jews around him by the perfection to which he attained in the former. At this time St. Jerome appears to

* Epistle to Damasus.

have suffered greatly from weakness in the eyes, caused by over-application to study; so that his various translations and original writings were interfered with.

In the year 381, Damasus called a Council to decide upon the schism of Antioch, and probably at his wish St. Jerome repaired to Rome, in company with the Bishops Paulinus and Epiphanius, and Damasus employed him as his secretary, confiding to him many of the most important affairs of the Church. His respect for Jerome's knowledge and judgment was very great: he was ever consulting him on various theological points, and urging him warmly to continue writing. It was at the request of Damasus that St. Jerome undertook his version of the Scriptures.

At Rome the influence of Jerome was boundless: his talents, his eloquence, the austerity of his religious life, won for him the respect and admiration of all ranks. His spiritual guidance was eagerly sought after, and he became confessor and director to numbers of noble matrons and virgins. And the self-abnegation and austerity which the saint practised himself, he enjoined upon his spiritual children, to whom his least word was a law.

Among the many noble ladies who gave up the world and its attractions to follow the rigid maxims inculcated by St. Jerome, was Asella, who long

after the death of her master is found practising all the active duties of charity, and is described as "the gentlest of women"; Lea, a widowed lady, of whose history we know but little; Marcella, who has been called "the perfect model of a Christian widow":—she was the daughter of a noble race of Romans, and, left a widow after seven months marriage, she resolved on devoting her great wealth to the service of God, and accordingly, laying aside her costly garments for ever, she became what St. Paul would have a widow to be, and "dying daily," she counted all things but loss, that she might win Christ. To her ardour for sacred study, her venerable preceptor bears honourable witness. "I know," he writes, "the fervour and depth of her faith. I know the holy ardour which flowed in her, beyond the usual power of her sex. I know that, casting aside the weakness of her nature, she fearlessly crossed the sea of the world, guided by the Divine light. But when I reflect upon her zeal for study, her energy, and her application, I am forced to condemn my own indolence, that I, living in the quiet of a monastery, and beholding the manger where the shepherds came to worship the Holy Infant, I could not do as much as this noble lady in the hours she could snatch from the cares of her large family and of her household."*

* Tillemont.

Many virgins grew up under Marcella's guidance, and she continued in Rome until the invasion of the Goths, in 410, when she was seized and tortured to extract from her treasures which she had long ago surrendered to the poor, while her only care seemed to be the fate of her adopted child, Principia. Her tears moved the barbarians, and they were both conducted to the church of St. Paul, to which Alaric had granted the right of sanctuary, and here, a few days afterwards, she departed this life.*

But the most illustrious among the female disciples of St. Jerome, and the one most closely associated with him, was Paula; the nobleness of whose devotion to religion was only equalled by her nobility of birth; for her father traced his origin to Agamemnon, whilst her mother counted the Scipios and the Gracchi amongst her ancestors. At an early age Paula became the wife of Toxotius, to whom she bore five children, upon all of whom a portion of their mother's piety seems to have descended. When plunged into the deepest grief, by the death of her husband, Marcella endeavoured to lead Paula to the only true source of consolation, and the result was that Paula devoted herself to a life of charity and piety with as much fervour as her instructress — dedicated as much of her pro-

* The Church of Rome still commemorates St. Marcella on January 31st.

perty to the poor, as she could in justice to her children do, and adopting habits of life and dress very different to those of the magnificent Roman matron, henceforward she truly seemed to have crucified to herself the world and the lusts thereof. The venerable Bishop Epiphanius was her guest when at Rome, and all holy and eminent men of God delighted in the society of the lowly, fervent, Paula. Her eldest daughter, Blesilla, was likewise widowed before she was twenty, and resolved upon following in her mother's footsteps, and contracting no second marriage. Blesilla met with ardent opposition from many of her relatives and friends, and her own resolution seemed at times in danger of yielding, but the exhortations of St. Jerome and of her mother prevailed, and she turned not aside. The former describes himself as reading with his young pupil the Book of Ecclesiastes, and leading her to lay closely to her heart the great lesson, that "Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."* The victory was gained—but in a few short months the silver cord was loosed, and the golden bowl broken; her dust returned to the earth as it was—and her spirit to the God who gave it. Her delicate frame was worn out by the agitations of mind she had un-

* Eccles. vii. 3.

dergone, and before renewed temptation and trial could sully the purity of the offering she had made of herself, God delivered her out of the miseries of this sinful world. Blesilla died surrounded by her relatives, and ministered to by her spiritual father, Jerome; her last words were, "Pray the Lord for me—my shortcomings are many."

Paula's anguish at this loss was very great, and she needed all the consolations and admonitions with which Jerome sought to strengthen her. He encouraged her to dwell upon the thoughts of Blesilla in Heaven, rather than Blesilla in the grave; and upon the time when, re-united to the loved ones who had preceded her, she should

"look back and smile

On thoughts that bitterest seemed erewhile,

And bless the pangs that made thee see

This was no world of rest for thee."

Nor was Paula altogether bereft. In Eustochia, her next daughter, she had not only the most exemplary child, but the most precious friend and companion, who from the first devoted herself to a life of celibacy, and never parted from her mother even for a single day, until Paula entered into her rest.

Meanwhile St. Jerome was not free from troubles and vexations—many of the Romans to whom his austerity and enthusiasm seemed as visionary

madness, joined in calumniating him ; his freedom in reproving error in all quarters, wheresoever it came under his notice, made him many enemies : and the death of his devoted friend, Damasus, gave these encouragement. So that Jerome, wearied with the continual conflict, resolved on leaving Rome, which he accordingly did, A.D. 385, accompanied by his brother, Paulinian, and several priests. They sojourned awhile at Cyprus with Epiphanius, and at Antioch with Paulinus, and thence journeyed to Jerusalem.

Here he was joined by Paula and Eustochia, in whom the longing to behold the favoured soil which had been trodden by their Master, became so powerful, that leaving Paula's two youngest children, they took ship, and reached Palestine early in the winter.

Meantime Jerome travelled in Egypt and Syria, studying eagerly all the sacred localities, and gaining an acquaintance with the manners of the country, which assisted him materially in his translations and comments on Scripture.

At Alexandria he sat at the feet of the celebrated blind man, Didymus, whose learning and piety were renowned in the churches.* Although he had stu-

* Didymus was born about 308, and, although blind from his infancy, he had acquired a wonderful knowledge of almost all authors sacred or profane, grammar, logic, rhetoric, arith-

died from his youth, his whitening locks became a teacher rather than a learner; still, he says, he esteemed it an honour to learn of Didymus.

After visiting the principal Egyptian monasteries, St. Jerome returned to Bethlehem, which although it was but a village, attracted numbers of Christians from all sides, who delighted to gaze on the hallowed spot where the Lord was born.

St. Jerome draws a pleasing picture of the unanimity and charity of those assembled brethren in faith, though of various countries and races. The only contention was, who should be the most truly humble. None sought for pre-eminence, nor were the diversities of habit and practice a source of mistrust or enmity. The gossiping, so common in a small place, was altogether banished, as well as luxury and self-indulgence; the numerous churches were constantly filled, and go where you would, you heard the labourer and the gleaner singing psalms and hallelujahs.

Here St. Jerome took up his abode "to await the day of judgment."

His wants were easily supplied—a few vegetables and barley bread were all he required; and he was

metic, music, geometry, astronomy, and philosophy. His piety equalled his learning, and St. Athanasius committed the school of Alexandria to his care. Didymus lived to a good old age.

now able to devote himself to his work. Night and day he was reading or writing, scarcely allowing himself time for sleep or refreshment; he read the Hebrew Bible with a Jew, called Barraban, who dared not come to Jerome but by night, for fear of his countrymen. The rapidity with which St. Jerome wrote his commentaries is wonderful—they had long been arranged in his mind, and he wrote at the rate of thirty or forty pages each day.

Meanwhile Paula and Eustochia had established themselves at Bethlehem, and as their society and guidance was sought by numerous pious females, they built a monastery and lived in community—their principal objects being to instruct the young, and to offer an asylum to such as in sincerity and penitence sought to devote themselves to God.

St. Jerome, after alluding to the luxury and delicacy in which these noble ladies had been brought up, says, "Now they are clothed in coarse raiment; and with strength they formerly knew not, they perform all manner of household offices, the which they share with their numerous companions. In prayer, in fasting, and in praise, thus do they wait for the Bridegroom's coming, their lamps well trimmed with oil."

Paula likewise built a monastery for men, under St. Jerome's special direction, and he himself built another, in which he dwelt, and where all the rites

of the Church were duly administered, and especially a large number of catechumens were yearly prepared for Baptism.

Close to the monastery St. Jerome built a hospital or refuge for travellers, in memory of St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, who, coming to Bethlehem, had found no house to lodge in. "Here," he says, "we receive all men with brotherly kindness, fearing lest in rejecting any of His servants we reject the Lord Himself, and that He should say, 'I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in.' The heretic alone is excluded. We wash the traveller's feet, and examine not into his deserts. There is scarcely an hour that troops of monks arrive not, so that our quiet is perpetually disturbed, and the multitude of our guests oblige me either to close our gates, or to leave reading those scriptures which teach me to open them. Would that the fame of this place, and the concourse of pilgrims attracted thereby, did not so entirely check my studies."

The few hours which Jerome could snatch from these active duties, he devoted to study, and these being always nocturnal, his eye-sight suffered materially from the torchlight. As the expenses of these establishments increased, St. Jerome dispatched his brother Paulinian to his native country, to sell the last remains of his patrimony, and thus consecrated all his earthly possessions to the one great cause.

Paula and Eustochia earnestly besought St. Jerome to continue the instructions which he had formerly given to them, and he consented to read the Bible with them, clearing away the difficulties which arose in their minds. Many of his commentaries were written at their request, and are dedicated to these two pious women.

But solicitations to exertion came upon him from other quarters. In compliance with the request of St. Chromatius and Heliodorus, he prosecuted his translation of the Septuagint, at which he laboured with unrelaxing activity—not daunted by the great difficulty he frequently found in his undertaking. It is said, that upon his recovery from a long illness, he translated the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, in three days. Nor were these all his labours. In the year 392, St. Jerome undertook to compile a chronicle of all ecclesiastical writers since the time of the Apostles, embracing heretics as well as Christians; for the purpose of refuting the statement made by the Emperor Julian, that the Christians could number no great philosophers or orators in their ranks.

About the same time, in addition to his other labours, he was called upon to oppose the heresy of Jovinian. This man, a Roman monk, being weary of his vows, and anxious to free himself from the obligations he lay under, taught that fasting was a

useless, slavish, observance, and that those who had received true baptism could never lapse into sin; together with other unorthodox doctrines. In reply to his depreciation of fasting, St. Jerome writes thus: "Adam received the command, in Paradise, to observe a fast as to one tree, while he ate of the rest. The blessedness of Paradise could not be confirmed to him without abstinence from food. As long as he fasted therefrom, he was in Paradise: he ate, and was cast out. How lost Esau his birth-right? for the sake of food, with an impatience which tears would not wash away. Israel, when making for the land flowing with milk and honey, longs after the flesh, gourds, and leeks of Egypt, and despises the food of angels. Moses, fasting on Sinai for forty days and forty nights, proved in the very letter that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God; whereas the full people were the while fashioning their idols. Nor were the tables of the law inscribed a second time, without a second fast. What excess had lost, abstinence regained; to shew us that as eating forfeited Paradise, fasting recovers it. Elias, after a forty days' fast, saw God in Horeb. Samuel and Hezekiah gained victory over the enemy by a fast; by a fast Nineveh averted God's wrath; by a fast impious Ahab deterred it. Hannah, by fasting, gained a son; by fasting Daniel gained to interpret the king's dream.

After an abstinence of three weeks from pleasant meats, an angel was sent to him. David humbled himself with fasting. The prophet from Judah lost his life by not fasting, and the lion shamed him by not eating the ass.

“In the New Testament, Anna, by fasting, gained a sight of her Lord. The Baptist lived on locusts and wild honey. Cornelius fasted, and was rewarded by Baptism. Paul adds fastings to his shipwrecks and perils. Timothy, his disciple, drank water only.”*

He proceeds to reproach Jovinian with the luxury of the table, and the pomp of vestment which he had now adopted. Jovinian was banished by the Emperor Honorius, to an island on the coast of Dalmatia, where he died.

It was about this time that Jerome was visited by Alypius, the friend and brother convert of St. Augustine, with whom he had corresponded for some time, but they had never met; and St. Augustine esteemed it as almost a personal interview when his beloved Alypius was conversing with St. Jerome.

Here, too, we may notice an incident connected with the history of St. Jerome; the death, namely, of a faithful son of the Church, Nepotian, that nephew on behalf of whom Heliodorus had left Jerome when he retired to Chalcis.

* Church of the Fathers.

It was to Nepotian that Jerome addressed his admirable epistle of advice to a young ecclesiastic—and seldom was there one more worthy of a saint's friendship. In the first years of his manhood Nepotian was in the glare and tumult of a court, yet even then the gorgeous robes becoming his rank covered the hair shirt of the ascetic; and very soon he cast down the sword and helmet, and, saying that he truly felt no man could serve two masters, gave his goods to the poor, and assumed the monk's habit, under the direction of Heliodorus, who shortly admitted him to Holy Orders. Jerome calls Nepotian "the Timothy of our day."

From this time his whole heart was absorbed in the sacred duties of his calling, he was ever amongst the poor and the sick, daily gaining the profligate by his gentle winning earnestness: and it is said, that the happy cheerfulness of his countenance quite effaced the traces of his personal austerity.

Though in truth superior to all the clergy around him, Nepotian ever esteemed himself least of all. Nor did he neglect the Church services in which he was eminent. His delight was in seeing everything disposed there decently and in order, and he would, himself, decorate the walls and altar, with fresh flowers and vine branches.

Such was the adopted son of Heliodorus,—upon whom God looking, He loved him and took him to

Himself. "In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure is taken for misery . . . but they are in peace . . . their hope is full of immortality . . . He pleased God, and was beloved of Him . . . so speedily was he taken away."*

The fame of St. Jerome was now dispersed throughout the world. From all sides, and from countries afar off, he was besieged with solicitations for advice on matters of practice and doctrine.

We find some Spanish Christians consulting him as to whether, when the conscience was not charged with special sin, they might safely receive the Holy Eucharist daily.

To this he gave an answer similar to that we find given by SS. Ambrose and Augustine; that, in all matters of discipline, each man should comply with the instructions of that branch of the universal Church to which he belongs.

Jovinian was succeeded as a troubler of the Church's peace by Vigilantius, who offered indignities to the holy martyrs; blaming the reverence shewn to them, and calling the practice of lighting candles (universally observed in the Church) a heathen rite. To him St. Jerome replies with considerable vehemence, "Who, madman, at any time, ever adored the martyrs? who took man for God?"

* Wisdom iii.

did not Paul and Barnabas, when thought to be Jupiter and Mercury by the Lycaonians, who would sacrifice to them, tear their garments, and say, they were men? We read the same of Peter, who raised Cornelius when desirous to worship him, saying, 'Rise, for I also am a man.'

"You say that we 'reverence the dead, and therefore blaspheme.' Read the Gospel. 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' You say that the souls of apostles and martyrs rest either in Abraham's bosom, or under the Altar of God, nor can be absent from their tombs, and where they will . . . Are you the man to prescribe laws to God? Will you put chains on apostles, so that till the Judgment Day those are kept in ward, and are not with their Lord, of whom it is written, 'They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.'

"We do not light wax tapers in broad day, but to relieve the darkness of night, and we watch unto the light, lest blinded by you, we may sleep in the dark... I do not deny that all of us who believe in Christ have come out of the errors of idolatry; for we are not born, but new-born Christians. And because we once honoured idols, ought we not now to honour God, lest we seem to venerate Him with an honour like that paid to idols?

"Throughout the Churches of the East, when

the Gospel is read, lights are lit, while the sun is bright, not at all to chase away the dark, but as a sign of rejoicing. Whence, too, those virgins in the Gospel have always their lamps lit. And the Apostles are told to have their loins girded, and their burning lights in their hands: and John Baptist is said to be 'a burning and shining light': that under the type of material light might be signified that light of which we read in the Psalter, 'Thy word, O Lord, is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths!' "

CHAPTER III.

— “Many waies to enter may be found,
But none to issue forth when one is in:
For discord harder is to end, than to begin.”

FAERIE QUEEN.

JEROME'S BREACH WITH RUFINUS—DIVISION IN THE CHURCH
CONCERNING ORIGEN—INVASION OF THE HUNS—JEROME'S
LETTER TO LETA ON THE EDUCATION OF HER DAUGHTER—
CONTROVERSY WITH RUFINUS—DEATH OF ST. PAULA—
CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN JEROME AND ST. AUGUSTINE
—JEROME'S EPISTLE TO DEMETRIUS—PERSECUTIONS OF
THE PELAGIANS—HIS DEATH.

WE must now turn to an important feature in St. Jerome's history, his quarrel with Rufinus, after a friendship of upwards of twenty-five years. This breach was occasioned by St. Jerome becoming alive to the doctrinal errors of Origen, of whom he had previously been a warm admirer, and a zealous defender, although he admitted some fallacies in his system, maintaining that they might be passed over, in consideration of the innumerable merits to be found in his writings. Accordingly Jerome had carefully collected all Origen's books, sometimes copying them with his own hands, and translating some, had

contributed in no small degree to their promulgation. Now convinced of the danger of these doctrines, no false pride hindered St. Jerome from openly avowing his change of opinion ; and he says that although the circumstance of his having expended such lavish commendations upon Origen, and now declaring against him, subjects him to the accusation of caprice and want of fixedness ; he would rather have his judgment condemned than his faith, and be esteemed a false friend than a false Catholic.

John, Bishop of Jerusalem, espoused the cause of Origen, and many painful scenes, which brought contempt and injury upon the cause to which both were pledged, ensued between him and St. Epiphanius, who came to Jerusalem with the intention of maintaining the true faith. If John was the more learned scholar, Epiphanius was the more pious Christian, and the former was moved with a bitter jealousy to see the people crowding around the venerable Epiphanius to gain his blessing.

Finding that John could not be induced to condemn the errors of Origen, Epiphanius enjoined Jerome and all his monks to separate from his communion, which they accordingly did. Bishop John had often wished to ordain Paulinian, Jerome's brother, but he had till now avoided the responsibility. Epiphanius however overruled his scruples,

and appointed him to officiate in the monastery at Bethlehem. He speaks highly of Paulinian's merit.

John was exceedingly indignant at the separation in his diocese, and gave orders to the parochial clergy to refuse Baptism to all the catechumens who came from St. Jerome's monastery, and to excommunicate all who held Paulinian to be lawfully ordained: "So that," says St. Jerome, "we are forced to gaze on the birthplace of the Saviour from afar, and to sigh over our exclusion thence, where even the heretics may enter." He complains likewise that John denied the last holy rite of burial to the dead.

John strove to obtain a civil sentence of banishment against St. Jerome, who expresses his regret that the attempt was not successful, as he would gladly have suffered exile for the cause in which he strove.

Whilst these distressing conflicts rent the east, St. Jerome was threatened with the loss of his faithful pupil and friend, Paula, who was seized with a dangerous illness, during which she was watched over both by Jerome and Epiphanius. Her life was however granted to their prayers.

Temporal trials were likewise at hand, in the shape of a fearful invasion of the Huns, about the year 396. St. Jerome says, "We have seen pour forth from the wilds of Mount Caucasus, whole

troops of wolves, who have rapidly overrun innumerable provinces. How many monasteries have been seized and destroyed! The rivers were dyed red with human blood. All the cities in their course, Antioch not excepted, were besieged. Whole bands of captives were led off like flocks of sheep, and Phenicia, Palestine, and Egypt trembled to experience the same fate."

In the expectation that the barbarians would shortly fall upon Jerusalem, known to be enriched by the costly offerings of pilgrims, Jerome and his companions held themselves in readiness to depart at any moment, more in order to save the females in Paula's monastery, than from wishing themselves to escape danger. But this trial they were spared, and St. Jerome remained in his cherished home; in speaking of which, however, he says that happiness lies, not in living at a holy place like Jerusalem, but in leading there a holy life.

In the year 397, a reconciliation was effected between Jerome, and Bishop John and Rufinus. They embraced and communicated together in the Church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem, and Jerome protests that on his part every shadow of angry feeling was laid aside, and that henceforward he sedulously avoided any appearance of doubt or ill-will.

We may assign to this period a letter written by

St. Jerome to Leta, wife of Toxotius, St. Paula's son, giving her instructions as to how she should educate her daughter, who was named Paula, after her grandmother, with the intention that she should come to Bethlehem, and under her auspices lead a religious life. Leta's father was a pagan, and a priest of Jupiter; but Jerome exhorts them to convert him by their gentle, peaceful piety. The little Paula was the child of many prayers, Leta having been married some years without having children, and St. Jerome reminds her that thus Paula was even before her birth dedicated to God. "Let her be brought up," he says, "as Samuel was, in the Temple; and as the Baptist, in the desert, in utter ignorance of vanity and vice. Let her never hear, learn, or discourse of anything but what may conduce to the fear of God. Let her never hear bad words, nor learn profane songs, but as soon as she can speak, let her learn some parts of the Psalms. Let those who come near her be strangers to the maxims and conversation of the world. Let her have an alphabet of little letters made in box or ivory, the names of all which she must know, that she may play with them, and that learning be made a diversion. When a little older, let her form each letter in wax with her finger, guided by another's hand; then let her be invited by rewards suitable to her age, to join syllables together, and to write

the names of the patriarchs down from Adam. Let her have companions to learn with her, that she may be spurred on by emulation, and by hearing their praises. She is not to be scolded or brow-beaten if slower, but to be encouraged, that she may rejoice to surpass, and be sorry to see herself outstripped and behind others; not envying their progress, but rejoicing at it and admiring it, whilst she reproaches her own backwardness. Great care is to be taken that she conceive no aversion to study, lest the bitterness remain in riper years. Let the words which she learns be chosen and holy, such as the names of the apostles and prophets. A master must be found for her, who is a man both of virtue and learning: nor will a great scholar think it beneath him to teach her the first elements of letters, as Aristotle did Alexander the Great. That is not to be contemned without which nothing great is to be acquired. Care must be taken that she be not accustomed by fond nurses to half-pronounce words, or to wear gold and purple: the first would prejudice her speech, the second her virtue. Great care is necessary that she never learn what she will have afterwards to unlearn. The eloquence of the Gracchi derived its perfection from the mother's elegance and purity of language, and that of Hortensius was framed from his father's breast. What young minds imbibe is scarce ever to be rooted out, and they are

disposed sooner to imitate defects and vices than virtues and good qualities. Alexander, the conqueror of the world, could never correct the faults in his gait and manner, which he had learned in his childhood from his master Leonides."

St. Jerome proceeds to give rules for the guidance of Paula as she grows older ; for her being continually employed in prayer, reading and work ; and especially recommends that she should from her infancy observe the Hours of prayer. Of the method in which she should study Scripture, he says, " She should first learn the Psalter ; then by reading the Proverbs she may study the precepts of virtue ; next, by Ecclesiastes, learn to despise the world, and learn by Job, patience and piety ; after this let her pass to the Gospels, which should be always in her hands ; next to the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles ; then get by heart the Prophets and the historical books ; and last of all she may venture to take into her hands the Book of Canticles, which she will then be prepared to understand in a spiritual sense." He also recommends that she study the writings of St. Cyprian, St. Athanasius, and St. Hilary.

Subsequently the young Paula came to Bethlehem, and devoted her life to charity and religion, striving to imitate the virtue of her grandmother, of whom she was no unworthy descendant.

Bodily infirmities now thickened upon St. Jerome. In 398, he speaks of an illness which had confined him entirely for three months; and again he says that for a year he had never been free from a most painful and oppressive languor; besides which one hand was suffering from a deep and dangerous wound.

This likewise incapacitated him from writing, and he was obliged to have recourse to dictation, of which he complains, as not nearly so favourable to correct composition.

Vexations also of a different kind awaited him. Notwithstanding the reconciliation which has been before mentioned, the Origenist controversy with Rufinus was by no means at an end; and both parties, in the heat of argument, too often indulged in personal reproaches. St. Chromatius wrote to St. Jerome, forcibly setting before him the injury done to Christianity at large by such contentions between its professors; to which St. Jerome entirely assented, but said, that so long as he was attacked he must defend himself, nor would he spare heresy. If Rufinus would abandon the defence of Origen, they should be of one mind; and he implies that there was as much pride as principle in Rufinus's obstinacy on this score. "If you seek peace," he says in conclusion, "lay down your weapons. I am easily softened by fair words, but I fear no menaces. Let us hold one faith, and we shall at once be at peace."

St. Augustine, too, watched the controversy with deep grief, and addresses the opponents thus :
“ Would that I could see you both, then would I throw myself in sorrow and in fear at your feet, and bathing them with my tears, I would pour forth all the tenderness and charity I feel for you, conjuring you by the welfare of your own souls, by the friendship that once existed between you, and by all the brethren for whom Christ died, and whose eyes are fixed on your dangerous example ; by all these I would conjure you to cease issuing writings against one another, which it is beyond your power to recall, and which will only serve to increase the difficulty of your reconciliation.”

But the bitterness of controversialists is not easily softened ; and probably, had the holy Augustine obtained his wish of personally seeking to reconcile them, his pious intentions would have been frustrated.

It is with much deeper pain that we find St. Jerome using violent and outrageous language respecting the meek and saintly Chrysostom, against whom he took part with Theophilus of Alexandria, whose deceitful and haughty character we have elsewhere described ;* and assuredly if we are called upon to make the comparison, we must allow that St. Chrysostom approached far nearer to the per-

* See Life of St. Chrysostom.

fection at which we are divinely instructed to aim, than his more impetuous and harsher contemporary.

In the year 404, St. Paula died, having been for a considerable time in a declining state. St. Jerome was with her to the last. His grief was very deep at this loss; so that all his occupations were for a time arrested. "We have lost," he writes, "the consolation and assistance of that holy and venerable woman, who was indeed a support to the pious." And when he sought to write some slight memoir of her, in compliance with Eustochia's request, he says, that for grief his fingers seemed paralysed, his pen fell from his hand, and his languishing spirit recoiled from the exertion. As to Eustochia, the loss to her was irreparable. Since they had abandoned the world, the mother and daughter had never been separated for a single day, and during Paula's long illness, her child never left her, save to kneel before God's Altar, in deep and fervent supplication, that when her mother died she might die, and with her be buried; and when the agonizing moment of separation was really come, the maiden's grief could only be compared, in St. Jerome's language, to a weaned child; she clung to the earthly remains of what she loved best on earth, and seemed unable to survive Paula. But shortly the renunciation of all attachment to earth and its joys, which she had so early made, came to Eustochia's

assistance, and she turned with renewed vigour to the charitable occupations which had been her mother's delight.

About this time a discussion arose, between St. Jerome and St. Augustine, upon the subject of St. Paul's reproof to St. Peter,* which St. Jerome considered to have been a thing pre-arranged between them, as a vehicle of instruction to others. St. Augustine objected to this construction, which seemed to give a Scriptural authority for deceit; in other words doing evil that good might come. We fear that there might have been as much acrimony and bitterness on this occasion, as between Jerome and Rufinus, had it not been for the christian meekness and calmness of the Bishop of Hippo.

Indeed owing to the miscarriage of a letter sent by him to Jerome, the latter became exceedingly angry and offended, and he addresses Augustine in no conciliatory manner; telling him not to imitate the example of those weak persons, who sought to render themselves illustrious by calumniating really great men.

Augustine's answer to this angry and uncalled for epistle, (Jerome was only a monk, while St. Austin was a bishop) is the most perfectly charitable and softening that could be imagined. He says, that nothing could be farther from his intentions than in

* Gal. ii. 11.

any way to offend Jerome, but whereinsoever he has unwillingly done so, he entreats his forgiveness. However much he might like to discuss matters of religious difficulty with him, for his own edification, yet that if there can be the slightest danger of disturbing the Christian unity that should exist between them, he would for ever abandon any such questions, and not wound the "charity which edifieth." St. Jerome's reply, though warm, is inspired with some of his friend's charity, and he says, "I am very sure that in this, as in all other matters, you seek not your own glory, but that of God."

But the increasing weakness of his body now warned St. Jerome that his earthly career was hastening to a close, and he devoted himself principally to the completion of his work on the Prophecies. "Engaged in this," he says, "I seem as it were in an exalted position, whence I look down upon the tempests and shipwrecks of the world, not without some pain, but not greatly affected thereby. Casting aside the present, I dwell only upon the future; and heedless of the opinions and judgment of man, I meditate upon the judgment of God. Oh, Eustochia, pray for me, that the same Spirit Who inspired these holy prophets, may penetrate me, and fill my heart."

In the year 410, Rome was taken by Alaric. When the news of this event reached Jerome, he was well nigh overwhelmed, so that night and day he

could think but of it, suffering in imagination with the sufferers. The thought that the light of the earth, great Rome, was quenched, deprived him of all energy; he remained idle, esteeming that a time to weep, and not to write. But he was soon roused to active duties. Multitudes of miserable victims sought refuge in the east, so that St. Jerome was more than ever engrossed with the duties of hospitality. Three noble Roman ladies, Proba, Juliana, and Demetrias,* were amongst those who were forced on this occasion to flee from Rome; and it was the subsequent determination of Demetrias to devote herself to a religious life. At the request of Proba and Juliana, St. Jerome addressed a letter to the maiden. It bears rather the character of a narration than an epistle. We give the following extracts. "Demetrias has despised the world's goods, regarding herself not as noble, not as surpassing rich, but as a child of man. An incredible fortitude, amid jewels and silk, troops of slaves and waiting women, the obsequiousness and attentions of a thronging household, and the refined dainties of a lordly establishment, to have longed for painful fastings, coarse garments, spare diet. In truth she had read the Lord's words, 'They who are clothed in soft raiment are in kings' houses... Away with all delay. God's perfect love casteth out fear. Take the

* They are mentioned in St. Austin's Life.

shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation: go out to battle. One thing, child of God, will I admonish you, to possess your mind with a love of sacred reading. When you were in the world, you loved the things of the world; to rouge and whiten your complexion, to deck your hair, and rear a tower of borrowed locks. Now since you have left the world, and by a second step after Baptism have made engagement with your adversary, saying to him, 'I renounce thee, devil, with thy pomps and thy works,' keep the covenant thou hast pledged...The arms of fasting are also to be taken up, and David's words to be sung, 'I humbled my soul in fasting,' 'I ate ashes as it were bread,' and 'when they were sick I put on sackcloth.' The Saviour of man Who left us the pattern of His perfection and life, after Baptism, was forthwith taken in the spirit to fight against the devil, and after beating down and crushing him, to give him over to His own disciples to trample on. Against the young our enemy uses the ardour of their time of life, which is cooled by God's Pity, and the rigour of fastings. . . . Nor do we enjoin on you unmeasured fastings, or an extravagant abstinence from food, which at once breaks delicate frames, and makes them sickly, ere the foundation of holy conversation is yet laid...Fasting is not an absolute virtue, but the foundation of other virtues; and sanctification and honour, without which no one

shall see the Lord. . . . I end as I began, not content with one admonition. Love holy Scripture, and wisdom will love thee; love her, and she will keep thee; honour her, and she will embrace thee. Let these be the ornaments abiding on thy neck and in thine ears. Let thy tongue know nought but Christ; let it have power to utter nought but what is holy.*

About the same time Rufinus died in Sicily. The character which Jerome gives of him is most unpleasing. He says, that he was a Nero at home, and a Cato in public.

St. Jerome was now eighty-six years old (A.D. 415), and St. Augustine writes to him in the following gratifying manner, after giving his opinion on certain matters: "Tell me if you think me wrong. Strange would it be indeed if I did not bow reverently before one who has so laboured to such edification. I thank God Who has enabled you to do so for it. If I am willing to communicate to others what I know, much more am I anxious to receive instruction from one whose capacity and learning have been instruments in the Lord's Hands, above all else, for facilitating the study of Holy Writ."

But troubles still awaited him in the short remainder of his days. In the year 416, a party of Pelagians, relying on the countenance of Bishop John, of Jerusalem, committed great disorders in

* Church of the Fathers.

Bethlehem ; seizing and maltreating both the male and female occupants of the monasteries ; killing one deacon, and wounding many. Eustochia and her niece, Paula, had to fly, and Jerome only escaped by shutting himself up in a strong tower, whence he saw his monastery in flames. On appeal, however, to Aurelius, Bishop of Rome, these persecutions were not renewed.

A little while before his own death, Jerome witnessed the peaceful departure of his faithful friend and pupil, Eustochia ; and some time in the month of September, 420, he followed ; having attained the venerable age of ninety-one. No authentic particulars of his last moments have reached us. He was buried within the precincts of his own monastery, at Bethlehem, but subsequently his remains were removed to the church of St. Maria Maggiore, in Rome.

The Church of Rome commemorates St. Jerome on September 30th ; against which day his name stands in our Calendar ; but this Saint's-day came within the list of those abolished, A.D. 1586, by King Henry VIII, on the score that they impeded the activity of the people, and encouraged sloth and idleness. Perhaps the reason at that time was in some sort good ; but it may be a question whether we do not err, at the present day, on the other side ; and whether we have not need to get rid somewhat of our own care and anxiety for the profits and business of this world, so great among the children

of the world, that any time now dedicated to religious devotion, save Sunday, is called a loss.

Even the days of the Apostles and Evangelists now do but receive a scanty notice, and have but a few of the faithful who share in their commemoration.

But St. Jerome might be ranked very highly in the English Church, as a saint worthy of commemoration; for certainly no one is more eminent for labour and critical research in the books of Holy Writ. The Latin Vulgate now in use, the principal Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures, is the work of St. Jerome. Add to which the Church owes to him many valuable commentaries on the prophets; commentaries also on many of the epistles; all enriched with valuable illustrations, and set forth with sound and laborious criticism.

He who in the present day would write upon the Holy Scriptures without the works of St. Jerome would sadly be deficient. His name, therefore, as a doctor of the Church, as well as a confessor and saint, deserves our peculiar veneration. How few, while they read his name in the Calendar, either know or appreciate his labours; how few, while they read the Scriptures in their native tongue, are aware that he to whom they principally owe that blessing, is the holy, the laborious, the stern, yet faithful Jerome.

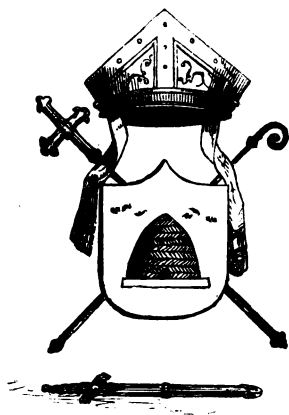
ST. AMBROSE.

To thee an eye to trace out the third Heaven
In holy writ, and see the Mercy Throne,—
A brother's love—a poet's lyre was given;
But yet o'er all thy gifts the Pastor shone,
To God's high Altar bound, no more thine own.

I see thee stand before the injur'd shrine,
While Theodosius, to thy stern decree
Falls down, and owns the Keys and Power Divine:
For kings that fain her nursing-sires would be,
To the Eternal Bride must bow the knee.

I see thee thron'd upon the Teacher's seat,
And 'mid the crowd a silent wanderer steal:
In his sad breast, while sitting at thy feet,
The Father doth th' Eternal Son reveal,
And Austin from thy hands receives the Spirit's seal.

THE CATHEDRAL.



LIFE OF ST. AMBROSE.

CHAPTER I.

From God these heavy cares are sent for our unrests,
And with such burdens for our wealth He fraughteth full
our breasts.

All that the Lord hath wrought, hath beauty and good
grace,

And to each thing assigned is the proper time and place.

EARL OF SURREY, 1557.

PARAPHRASE ON THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

PARENTAGE OF ST. AMBROSE—ANECDOTE OF THE BEES—HIS
EDUCATION—HIS SISTER—BECOMES A CIVIL GOVERNOR—
CHOSEN BISHOP OF MILAN—ENDEAVOURS TO AVOID IT—HIS
BAPTISM.

IN the life of St. Chrysostom, we have traced the
history of one of God's eminent servants in per-
secution, in affliction, in temporal discomfiture, and
finally in a martyr's death. And now we turn to a
very opposite narrative; that of St. Ambrose,
Archbishop of Milan, who, under the blessing of

God, set at defiance all opposition; was almost invariably victorious in all his combats in behalf of the Church; and after enjoying the most devoted affection and reverence of three successive emperors, died at last a calm and peaceful death; his last victory being that over sin and the grave.

The historian Gibbon, whose sympathies are all engaged against the holy cause in which Ambrose triumphed, is compelled to award to him the palm of episcopal vigour and ability;* whilst a living author,† instituting a comparison between this Saint, and St. Chrysostom, in favour of the western bishop, would attribute the authoritative energy and unshaken resolution, which are so remarkable in him, to the Roman blood flowing in his veins.

The father of Ambrose, who bore the same name as his illustrious son, was a citizen of Rome, and of noble family. At the time when our history begins he held the high office of Prætorian Præfect, or Imperial lieutenant of Gaul, which jurisdiction included part of Italy and Germany, and the British and Spanish provinces. It is not quite certain whether the vice-regal court was held at Arles or at Treves; but in one of these two cities, about the year A.D. 340, St. Ambrose was born.

* The palm of episcopal vigour and ability was justly claimed by the intrepid Ambrose."—*Decline and Fall*, c. 27.

† Milman.

He was the third child; the eldest, Marcellina, was, from an early period, devoted to a religious life; Satyrus, the only brother of Ambrose, continued, as long as he lived, his dearest friend and counsellor.

All ancient authors dwell with considerable interest on an anecdote mentioned of Ambrose's infancy. The child's cradle was placed in the open court of his father's palace; when a swarm of bees settled upon it, and without even awakening the little slumberer, crept in and out of his open mouth.* The terrified nurse would have driven away the bees, but the elder Ambrose, who was near, forbade her to disturb them; and before long they took flight, and rose in the air until lost to sight. The governor received this incident as a presage of his child's future greatness; and that his words should be "sweet as honey and sweeter than the honey-comb."

It seems probable that his father died whilst Ambrose was yet in his infancy, and his mother

* The same incident is told concerning Plato. "At Platon, cum in cunis parvulo dormienti, apes in labellis condisissent, responsum est, singulari illum suavitate orationis fore: ita futura eloquentia provisa in infante est."—Cicero, *de Divinatione*, l. 36. "Plato, yet a child, was sleeping in his cradle, when some bees settled upon his little lips; thereupon it was declared by those skilled in divination, that he would be endowed with singular sweetness of speech: thus the future eloquence of the philosopher was foreseen in the infant."

returned with her three children to live in Rome. Almost the only trait on record of the saint's childhood, is that seeing his mother and sister reverently kiss the bishop's hand, he held out to them his little hand for a similar token of respect; replying to their inquiries as to his motive—that he was sure one day he should be a bishop.

From his birth and position, Ambrose naturally enjoyed all the advantages of education. He pursued his studies in conjunction with Satyrus, and they both very quickly acquired an ample knowledge of Roman and Grecian literature, not neglecting either poetry or oratory, both of which arts were subsequently exercised by Ambrose.

But he had also that greatest of all advantages,—the constant influence of a happy, pious home; where Marcellina resided with her mother, although she had taken the vows of celibacy; and there she devoted herself to works of charity and piety. Her superior age, and the sanctity of her life, gave Marcellina the strongest influence over her brothers; both seem to have always preserved for her a most devoted affection, almost veneration; and throughout his most active episcopate, Ambrose corresponded amply and confidentially with this beloved sister.

His education being finished, Ambrose began his professional career by pleading causes in the

Prætorian court at Rome, and with so great success that he was soon advanced to the council by Anicius Probus, prefect of Italy. Satyrus entered the same profession; and about the year 369, both brothers were appointed by the prefect to civil governments.

Ambrose was made governor of Æmilia and Liguria,—a post of considerable power and dignity;* and, as though everything concerning him had a prophetic tendency, the parting words of Anicius Probus to his young favourite were: “Rule the province, not as a judge, but as a bishop.” Ambrose resided in Milan, exercising his office with great wisdom and judgment, and gaining the universal esteem and love of the Milanese, and indeed of all under his jurisdiction.

For some years this most important city had had for its spiritual ruler an Arian bishop, named Auxentius. Auxentius was intent upon the introduction of many innovations, and particularly bent upon the maintenance of the Arian dogma, of the dissimilarity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, in opposition to the unanimous decision of the western Church. The Bishops of Gaul and Venice having reported that similar attempts to disturb the peace of the Church were being made by others, the

* Including Milan, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, and Ravenna. (*Tillemont.*)

bishops of several provinces assembled at Rome, and decreed that Auxentius, and those who held his sentiments, should be excluded from communion.* He long continued however to baffle all the attempts of the Catholics to depose him; but A.D. 374, he died. Upon this the bishops of the province met according to custom, to elect their metropolitan. They announced their intended meeting to the Emperor Valentinian I, who in his reply, says: "Imbued as you are with the doctrines of Holy Scripture, you cannot but know well what should be the character of one raised to the episcopate. His life should teach his flock as well as his precepts. He should be a model of virtue, and his daily practice should be holy as his doctrine. Give then to the Church of Milan a bishop such as this, so that we ourselves may submit our crown and sceptre to his counsels and corrections; and as men subject to faults and frailties, we will receive his reproofs and admonitions as the most wholesome physic.†

The bishops invited the emperor to appoint himself the prelate of whose character and office he held so high a standard; but Valentinian refused to do so, saying, that to interfere in the appointment of God's ministers became him not: they were the fittest judges.‡

* Sozomen, bk. xv. chap. 23. † Theodoret, bk. iv. chap. 6.

‡ Socrates, bk. iv. chap. 30.

The assembly met in the Cathedral, and a violent contest began, between the orthodox party and the Arians, who were unwilling to submit to a Catholic bishop. The tumult rose high, and Ambrose, in his capacity of civil magistrate, went to the church, in order to quell what promised to become a serious riot. He addressed the excited and violent partizans, with a calm, simple, eloquence, that acted with a wonderful soothing power upon them.* In a moment of silence a voice in the crowd exclaimed, "Ambrose, be bishop."

The cry was instantly taken up by all around, and all parties joined with one accord in the shout for Ambrose to be their spiritual governor.

The astonishment of the popular magistrate may be conceived, on finding himself thus suddenly called upon to undertake so solemn and sacred an office; which his whole education and character would induce him to invest with the utmost reverence and respect, and for which, being as yet only a catechumen, he would feel unfit and unprepared.

Accordingly, Ambrose refused to listen to the popular wish, and as the people still persevered, he endeavoured to shew them his unfitness for the duties they sought to impose on him; even affecting a harshness, and want of feeling unnatural to him.

* Socrates, bk. v. chap. 30.

But the Milanese were not so easily deceived ; and finding that their opinion was unaltered, that night Ambrose left his home, with the intention of retiring to Pavia, until some one else was appointed Bishop of Milan. But whether from the excitement of his mind, or (according to the popular belief) that God would not permit him to evade the spiritual charge which he afterwards so well fulfilled, when morning came, Ambrose found that his wanderings had brought him back to the walls of Milan, and that he was at the *Porte Romana*. He now withdrew to the villa of his friend *Leontius*, whilst the people, resolved on gaining their point, applied to the emperor for confirmation of their choice. This *Valentinian* readily gave ; and at the united command both of the Church and the Emperor, *Leontius* surrendered his friend, and Ambrose was constrained to own it the will of God that he should become bishop, and submitted accordingly, in the words of an old author, to “lay down the fasces and take up the crosier.”*

* St Ambrose's ordination was canonical only on the supposition that it came under those rare exceptions, for which the rules of the Church allow when they speak of election ‘by divine grace,’ by the immediate suggestion of God ; and if ever a bishop's character and works might be appealed to as evidence of the divine purpose, surely Ambrose was the

The sacrament of Baptism was administered to him, and eight days afterwards ensued the solemn consecration, the emperor being present,* and Ambrose was Bishop of Milan, Dec. A.D. 374.

subject of that singular and extraordinary favour."—*Church of the Fathers.*

* Theodoret, book iv. chap. 7.

CHAPTER II.

My soul hath undergone
Change manifold for better or for worse,
Yet cease I not to struggle and aspire
Heavenward ; and chide the part of me that flags
Through sinful choice, or dread necessity
On human nature from above imposed.

WORDSWORTH.

LETTER OF ST. BASIL—HABITS OF ST. AMBROSE—HIS OCCUPATIONS—GENERAL CHARACTER—EMPEROR GRATIAN—RAVAGES OF THE GOTHs—DEATH OF HIS BROTHER SATYRUS—CONTESTS WITH THE EMPRESS JUSTINA—REBELLION OF MAXIMUS—DEATH OF GRATIAN—AMBROSE AN AMBASSADOR—CONVERSION OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

THIS unexpected, and somewhat unusual consecration was no sooner generally known, than letters of approval and congratulation arrived from all quarters.

One of the most acceptable to the new bishop was that from St. Basil. "It is thus," he says, "that in all ages God has ever chosen to Himself those capable of serving Him ;* go on therefore, O

* Tillemont.

thou man of God : and since thou hast not received or learnt the Gospel of Christ from man, but that our Lord Himself has taken thee from among the secular judges, and translated thee to an apostolic chair, fight the good fight, correct and reform the people ; revive the ancient footsteps of the fathers, and by frequent letters, build up the foundation of love and kindness now laid between us ; that how far distant soever may be our habitations, our minds and spirits may be near at hand, to converse together.”*

Once having assumed the episcopal character, Ambrose considered himself as set apart to the service of God, and severed from all worldly interests and pursuits. His estates he immediately bestowed upon the Church, reserving only what was a suitable maintenance for his sister Marcellina. To Satyrus was committed the charge of the episcopal establishment and its requisite expenditure ; and Ambrose personally adopted the severe simplicity, and monastic austerity, which so strongly contrasted with the pomp and splendour of the civil dignity he had lately held. He was of course rigid in the observance of fast days according to the doctrine of the Church, but more than this, Ambrose refused even on those days not thus set apart by

* Cave.

the Church, to enter into general society, pleading his multitudinous engagements as an ample excuse.* His time was fully occupied with the divine offices, (he daily administered the Holy Eucharist, besides frequently preaching), with the necessary details of business connected with the episcopate; and with receiving the confessions of his flock, and administering to them absolution and ghostly counsel. And if St. Ambrose was eminent in conspicuous and visible labours in the Church, he seems not to have been less so in this sacred and private part of his ministerial duties. The guiltiest, the weakest, the most timid, alike found in their bishop a ready counsellor and guide, who entering into the difficulties of each,

“As if nor man nor angel lived on earth,”

would often weep over their sins, as though he had participated therein; and though unsparing until he had aroused a fit contrition and repentance, never failed to dismiss a true penitent with “words of blessing and of peace,” while his own prayers ascended up for pardon through Him Who died to gain it for His followers.†

* Yet he exercised a free hospitality, both to rich and poor, who always found a welcome at his table.

† “Whenever any one confessed his falls to him, in order to perform penitence, he so wept as to force the other also to

Besides this, according to a custom then common in the Church, (for the bishop was the judge in many causes, as indeed he is in theory even still), St. Ambrose was always ready to hear those causes which were brought before him, and frequently pacified contending parties, so as to avoid strife and ill-will.

And still moreover, in addition to all these active duties, Ambrose applied himself energetically to theological studies, adopting as his guide and master, Simplician, a Roman priest, who lived to succeed Ambrose on the episcopal throne. These studies were so diligently prosecuted that he soon became a master therein. Nor was the study of devotion omitted—for what saint ever yet shone in the Church, who was not “instant in prayer”? while in the day he was in the court or in the pulpit, in the night he was watching silently and praying for the only help of all human weakness—nor was that help wanting. The silent prayer at night gave him the strength for day, so that instead of becoming proud of the exaltation he had received, his humility seemed daily to increase, and he dwelt more and more upon his unworthiness of God’s favour.

weep: for he seemed to be cast down with him who had been cast down. The nature of the offences which they confessed to him, he uttered to none but God only, with Whom he interceded.”—Paulinus’s *Life of St. Ambrose*.

The unbending justice, and uncourtly truth, subsequently so remarkable in St. Ambrose, began early to show itself; for, soon after his elevation, he wrote to the emperor in severe though merited displeasure, against some of the imperial officers of high rank. Valentinian replied: "I was long since acquainted with your fearless independence of speech, which did not hinder me from consenting to your ordination: continue to apply to our sins the remedies prescribed by the Divine law."*

Such was the character of Milan's bishop, and it is truly said, that "the Old and New Testament met in the person of Ambrose, the implacable hostility to idolatry, the abhorrence of every deviation from the established formulary of belief; the wise and courageous benevolence, the generous and unselfish devotion to the great interests of humanity."†

It was probably in the first years of his episcopate that St. Ambrose wrote his commentary on St. Luke, and the treatise *De Virginibus*, especially dedicated to his sister Marcellina.

In the year 375, Valentinian I. expired, and his son Gratian,‡ who had already been associated with his father in the empire, now admitted his infant brother,

* Theodoret, bk. iv. chap. 7.

† Milman.

‡ "Gratian immediately manifested the piety with which he was imbued, and consecrated the first fruits of his empire to God."—Theodoret, book v. chap. 2.

the second Valentinian, as his colleague: the latter remaining under the tutelage of his mother Justina.

Gratian had the same reverence for the Bishop of Milan as had been entertained by his father; and he applied to him for instruction in the true Faith. It was in compliance with this request, that St. Ambrose wrote his books *De Fide* and *De Spiritu Sancto*, both of which are dedicated to the Emperor Gratian.

But difficulties and troubles were at hand. The see of Sirmium fell vacant in 379, and a contest arose between the orthodox and the Arians, which party should furnish the new bishop. St. Ambrose immediately went to the scene of contention, and appointed Anemmius to the see; but Justina, who was an Arian,* and moreover a woman of violent and ungoverned temper, was extremely irritated at this discomfiture of her party, and from that time all her efforts were turned towards annoying and opposing Ambrose.

* "Justina perceiving the fervour of her husband Valentinian's zeal for the faith, had concealed her sentiments during his life. But after his death, she boldly presented those erroneous doctrines to the young and flexible mind of her son. He readily listened to the representations of his mother, and was seduced by the allurements of maternal affection, without discerning the deadly nature of the bait."—Theodoret, book v. chap. 13.

Gratian had, by the death of the Arian Valens, become master of the whole Eastern empire, which was suffering grievously under the ravages of the Goths, who carried captive the inhabitants into a cruel slavery. In behalf of these, St. Ambrose not only gave all the money he could procure, but even melted many of the consecrated Church vessels, and when reproached for so doing by his enemies, he replied, that "the Church possesses gold, not to treasure up, but to distribute it for the welfare and happiness of men. We are ransoming the souls of men from eternal perdition. It is not merely the lives of men, and the honour of women, which are endangered in captivity, but the faith of their children. The Blood of Redemption which has gleamed in these golden cups has sanctified them, not for the service alone, but for the redemption of man."*

About this time also St. Ambrose suffered great grief in the loss of his brother Satyrus. He had gone over to Africa, to arrange some affairs in which both brothers were concerned, and in the passage was shipwrecked off the coast of Sardinia. Satyrus was only a catechumen, and before he commenced the perilous voyage, he wished to receive baptism, and enter into full communion with the Church; but finding that the bishop under whose jurisdiction

* Milman.

he was cast was in schism, he preferred incurring further risks to receiving the holy rite at his hands. Satyrus reached Africa in safety, and was baptized. On his return to Milan, he found his brother recovering from a dangerous illness, in which he had sorrowed much that the dearest friend he had on earth should not be at hand to close his eyes. But God, Who ordereth all things aright, was pleased to summon Satyrus first. No sooner had he escaped from all his perils by land and by water, than sickness seized him, and very quickly death—so quickly “that it seems,” says an old writer, “as if God had only preserved him so long, that he might expire in the arms of his holy brother.”*

Wholly resigned to his Master's will as St. Ambrose was, yet this unexpected sorrow pressed him very sore. Still, remembering how he had given up his whole being to one object, the service of God, he was able to say—

“My friends Thou puttest by,
The more to bind
Unto Thine arm,”†

and calmly, almost cheerfully, to commit the remains of what had been so dear to him to the grave, and there addressing the bystanders, whose grief was more loudly expressed (for Satyrus had been much

* Tillemont.

† Rev. I. Williams.

beloved), St. Ambrose told them that it was not forbidden to Christians to weep over their bereavements; that true submission was rather shewn in patiently bearing grief than struggling with it;* and then passing on to the resurrection, he dwelt upon its glorious doctrine, until the grief, both of himself and his hearers, was absorbed in the Christian truth that death is swallowed up in victory.

“ A crown, a throne on God's right-hand,
Where saints their robes of ray expand,
Where saints are kings, and on their state
High angels wait.” †

Public affairs now pressed on Ambrose's attention. Under the support of the Empress Justina, two Arian bishops, Palladius and Secundianus, petitioned Gratian to summon a General Council to decide upon the differences in the Church, hoping, together with the eastern Arians, to gain the ascendancy. Ambrose opposed this as unnecessary and burdensome upon the more distant prelates, and Gratian only called a synod at Aquileia, which was accordingly held, A. D. 381. The result was that Palladius and Secundianus were deposed.

Events of more general importance were at hand. (A. D. 383.) Gratian was not sufficiently martial to satisfy his warlike subjects; and when Maximus, a

* Tillemont.

† Bishop Ken.

bold, enterprising man, who held some military rank in Britain,* rose against his sovereign, the imperial troops deserted their emperor and joined the rebel. Gratian did not fly with as much speed as he might have done, and being overtaken, was basely murdered by Andragathius, one of Maximus' generals.†

Gratian's last words are said to have been a wish that his "Father Ambrose" had been present to minister the last consolatory offices of religion in his dying moments.‡

The haughty usurper now threatened to advance upon Milan, and for the time all Justina's enmity towards St. Ambrose was forgotten, in the consciousness that he only was now competent to assist her and her royal son. Ambrose accordingly undertook the office of ambassador, and crossing the Alps, entered the camp of the victorious rebel, where he "exercised, with equal firmness and dexterity, the powers of his spiritual and political character."§ The rude, untaught conqueror was overawed, and a peace was concluded. In this case, as in all others, the unbending resolution of Ambrose was displayed, for although the favour of Maximus was of course desirable both for him and his cause, yet he abso-

* Gibbon says he was not general; Camden, on the contrary, gives him that rank.

† Gibbon.

‡ Butler.

§ Gibbon.

lutely refused to communicate with one whose hands were reeking with the blood of his sovereign.

On returning to Milan, St. Ambrose found a party headed by Symmachus, prefect of the city, making a great stir on behalf of paganism. They presented to the young Emperor Valentinian II a petition for the restoration of the altar of Victory, and likewise of the privileges formerly enjoyed by the vestals. The appeal was eloquent, and from the plausibility of its arguments might have succeeded, but for the counter appeal of St. Ambrose, which had all the power and force of truth in its favour. His address is too long to be quoted here, but replying, one by one, to the points raised by Symmachus, he says, "You are suppliants to the emperors that they would be favourable to your gods, but we are petitioners to the Son of God, that He would be propitious to the emperor."*

Valentinian seems to have entertained no doubt which of his two petitioners spoke truth, and Symmachus was banished from the city.

The same year Ambrose was, under God's Blessing, the means of converting one of the greatest saints of the early Church—St. Augustine.

The details of his struggles against the truth, and his restless wanderings in search of it, are given

* Cave.

elsewhere*—here we must only speak of him so far as his history is interwoven with that of Ambrose.

Augustine had accepted the office of teacher of rhetoric in Milan, and having been made known to the bishop, and being attracted by his kindness of manner, went to hear him preach. "I listened," says Augustine, "diligently to him preaching to the people, not with that intent I ought, but, as it were, trying his eloquence, whether it answered the fame thereof, or flowed fuller or lower than was reported; and I hung on his words attentively; but of the matter I was as a careless and scornful looker-on; and I was delighted with the sweetness of his discourse, more recondite, and yet in manner more winning and harmonious than that of Faustus.† Of the matter, however, there was no comparison; for the one was wandering amid Manichean delusions, the other teaching salvation most soundly. But salvation is far from sinners, such as I then stood before him; and yet I was drawing nearer, little by little, and unconsciously."‡

But Augustine did not long continue merely a curious bystander; the forcible yet simple words of the preacher penetrated deeply into his heart, and

* See Life of St. Augustine.

† A celebrated Manichean orator.

‡ Confessions of St. Augustine, Oxf. Trans. bk. 5. xiii.

working there, roused him into a state of great agitation and uneasiness. He longed to seek out the holy man, and unburthen his heart, laden with doubts and fears, to him; and for this purpose several times entered the episcopal abode, which was always open. But either unwillingness to intrude upon the valuable time of Ambrose, or possibly a shrinking from exposing the disease of his own mind, held Augustine back, and for some time he continued only attending upon his public ministrations; till Simplician, the friend of Ambrose, became his friend likewise, and thence Augustine attained to closer communication with St. Ambrose, by whom he was subsequently admitted into the Church in Holy Baptism.

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CHAPTER III.

Adverse and prosperous fortunes both work on
Here for the righteous man's salvation ;
Be he oppos'd, or be he not withstood,
All serve to th' augmentation of his good.

HERRICK'S NOBLE NUMBERS.

NEW CONTEST WITH JUSTINA—AMBROSIAN CHANTS—MARTYRS GERVASIUS AND PROTASIUS—AMBROSE AMBASSADOR THE SECOND TIME—MAXIMUS ENTERS ITALY—IS DEFEATED AND EXECUTED BY THEODOSIUS.

WE must now turn to that great struggle between the spiritual and temporal powers, which subsequently became a matter of no slight historical importance.

Justina had taken the part of the Arians to the utmost of her power, and they had now set up a bishop of their own in Milan itself, and, in the name of the young Valentinian, demanded of Ambrose the Portian Basilica for their heretical worship.

Without any hesitation, Ambrose refused to comply with this request, saying : " Do not, O Valentinian, suppose you have a right over sacred things.

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Exalt not yourself, but as you would enjoy a continuance of power, be God's subject. It is written, God's to God, and Cæsar's to Cæsar. The palace is the emperor's, the churches are the bishop's."*

Irritated at this decided refusal, Justina endeavoured to excite the people against St. Ambrose, but in vain.

Towards the conclusion of Lent, a new attempt was made. Justina demanded the new or Roman basilica; and received a similar reply to the former one. Stung by this refusal, the court now resolved to have recourse to violence.

On Palm Sunday, whilst Ambrose was engaged with the catechumens, who were on the approaching Easter festival to be baptized, he was informed that the Imperial guards were taking possession of the Portian basilica. The bishop continued the services of the day, but shortly he was told that the enraged populace had seized one of the Arian priests. Ambrose sent some of his clergy to the rescue. But the Holy Week was profaned by the unjust and tyrannical measures of the court; Justina and her creatures seeking to intimidate the faithful by oppression and imprisonment.

Ambrose did not seek to avoid persecution; he was always to be found either in the church or at

* Church of the Fathers.

his own house, but not for one moment did he swerve from his resolute purpose of defending the Catholic cause.

He thus describes an interview with the adverse party: "I had a meeting with the courts and tribunes, who urged me to give up the Basilica without delay, on the ground that the emperor was but acting on his undoubted rights, as possessing sovereign power over all things. I made answer, that if he asked me for what was *my own*, my estate, money, or the like, I would make no opposition, though, to tell the truth, all that was mine was the property of the poor; but that he had no sovereignty over things sacred. If my patrimony is demanded, seize it; my person, here I am. Would you take me to prison or to death? I go with pleasure. Far be it from me to entrench myself within the circle of a multitude, or to clasp the altar in supplication for my life; rather will I be a sacrifice for the altar's sake. In good truth, when I heard that soldiers were sent to take possession of the Basilica, I was horrified at the prospect of bloodshed which might ensue. I shrunk from the odium of having occasioned slaughter, and would sooner have given my own throat to the knife. Presently they bade me calm the people. I replied, that all I could do was not to inflame them; but God Alone could appease them. For myself, if I

appeared to have instigated them, it was the duty of the government to proceed against me. Upon this they left me.”*

The Arians now surrounded the church in which Ambrose was solemnizing divine service; the imperial troops entered: Ambrose threatened them with excommunication if they disturbed the service; and kneeling down, the soldiers declared they came to pray, not to fight. And then the usual time for his sermon being come, St. Ambrose preached upon the lesson for the day—the patience of Job—exhorting the congregation to meekness and endurance.

The court now began to feel, as is always the case, according to the Holy Scripture, that the strength of the Church is invulnerable when she rests in patience and in confidence. If the Church suffers, she conquers. Accordingly, a message was sent to St. Ambrose, no longer in the language of command or intimidation; but rather appealing to his mercy, and accusing him of tyranny towards the emperor.

Ambrose asked whether, when he interposed between Maximus and the weak and infant emperor, he had acted like a tyrant? adding, “Priests have by old right bestowed sovereignty, never assumed it; and it is a common saying, that

* Trans. from Am. Epis. in the Church of the Fathers.

sovereigns have coveted the priesthood more than priests the sovereignty. Christ hid Himself, lest He should be made a king. We have a dominion of our own. The dominion of the priest lies in his helplessness, as it is said, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.'"^{*}

It was suggested that Valentinian should go to the church and meet his "tyrant"; but the young emperor declined, saying, "his eloquence would compel you to lay me bound hand and foot before his throne."[†]

For the time the court gave way, and Ambrose was left unmolested; but that he anticipated a renewal of the struggle, is apparent from his own words: "Thus the matter rests, I wish I could say, has ended; but the emperor's words are of that angry sort which shows that a more severe contest is in store."[‡]

This judgment proved correct. Justina's next measure, was to induce her son to pass a law inflicting capital punishment on all who should interfere with the Arian assemblies. The empress summoned Benevolus, secretary of state, and commanded him to draw up an edict to this effect; but he being firmly attached to the Catholic Church, refused to

^{*} Church of the Fathers.

[†] Milman.

[‡] Church of the Fathers.

write the document, and rejecting all the proffered honours and rewards with which Justina sought to gain him, Benevolus laid his official instruments at her feet, declaring he would neither receive recompense, nor retain his situation, at the expense of his conscience. Less conscientious officials were however soon found, and the law was promulgated.*

The following Lent, A.D. 386, Justina and her adherents recommenced their efforts, and Ambrose persevered in his calm, steady opposition. He received an intimation that he had better depart into a voluntary banishment; but such a timorous measure was not at all suited to the bishop's character; he was in church when the message came, and it was thus that he spoke of it to his flock: "Why are you under so sudden an excitement, and turn your eyes on me? Did you hear that an imperial message has been brought to me by the tribunes, desiring me to depart hence whither I would, and to take with me all who would follow me? What, did you fear that I would desert the Church, and for fear of my life abandon you? I replied that I could not for an instant entertain the thought of deserting the Church, in that I feared the Lord more than the emperor of a day: in truth that, should force hurry me off, it would be my body, not my mind,

* Sozomen, book vii. chap. 14.

which suffered the violence; that should he act in the way of kingly power, I was prepared to suffer after the manner of a priest.

“Why then are you thus disturbed? I will never leave you of my own will; but if compelled I may not resist. I shall still have the power of lamenting, of weeping, of moaning: when weapons and soldiers assail me, tears are my weapons, for such are the defence of a priest. In any other way I neither ought to resist, nor am able; but as to retiring and deserting the Church—this is not like me. . . . A proposal was made to me to deliver up at once the church plate. I made answer that I was ready to give anything that was my own, estate or house, gold or silver; but that I could withdraw no property from God’s Temple, nor surrender what was put into my hands to preserve, and not to surrender. Besides I had a care for the emperor’s well-being; since it was as little safe for him to receive as for me to surrender, and I intreated him to suffer the words of a free-spoken priest, for his own good, and to keep clear of injuring his Lord.”*

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- * “Rapine has yet tooke nought from me:
But if it please my God I be
Brought at the last to th’ utmost bit,
God make me thankfull yet for it,
I have been gratefull for my store;
Let me say grace when there’s no more.”

Herrick’s Noble Numbers.

St. Ambrose then referred to the history of Naboth's vineyard, which had been read in the lesson for the day; and then mentioning the accusation, that he held men to himself by bonds of lucre, he says: "I confess I have stipendiaries; they are the poor of Christ's flock. The poor *are* my defenders, but it is by their prayers. Blind though they be, lame, feeble, and aged, yet they have a strength greater than that of the stout warriors."*

In the same discourse the saint says, "No one can deny that in what we say we pay to our sovereign due honour. What indeed can be higher than to style him a son of the Church? In saying this, we are loyal to him without sinning against God. For the emperor is *within* the Church, but not *over* the Church; and a religious sovereign seeks, not rejects, the Church's aid. This is our doctrine, modestly avowed, but enforced without wavering. Though they threaten fire, or the sword, or transportation, we, Christ's poor servants, have learned not to fear."†

For some time the imperial troops blockaded the episcopal palace and the basilica, where Ambrose and his congregation were wont to assemble. The congregation passed the long vigils in singing or chanting psalms; the verses being alternately taken

* Church of the Fathers.

† Ibid.

up by the choir on either side. This antiphonal chant had frequently been employed in the Eastern churches, but Ambrose was the first to introduce it among the faithful in the west.

St. Augustine speaks of the Ambrosian chant (a name still retained) in the following language: "Not long had the Church of Milan began to use this kind of consolation and exhortation, the brethren zealously joining with harmony of voice and hearts. The devout people kept watch in the church, ready to die with their bishop, Thy servant. Then it was first instituted that after the manner of the Eastern churches, hymns and psalms should be sung, lest the people should wax faint through the tediousness of sorrow. How did I weep, touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet-attuned Church. The voices flowed into my ears, and the truth distilled into my heart, whence the affections of my devotion overflowed, and tears ran down, and happy was I therein."*

But while the people, headed by their bishop, were thus learning the consolations of religion in spiritual energy, and making melody in their hearts unto the Lord, turning that which was danger and fear, into confidence and strength, the enemy was still active and ready for the contest. Failing now

* Conf. St. Augustine, book 9, vii.

in open force, the secret stratagems of malice must needs be resorted to. Justina hired an assassin to enter the sleeping chamber of the bishop, and take away his life; but by the mercy of God, His servant escaped from this peril.

St. Ambrose was about to consecrate a new church; and in a vision, became acquainted with the burying place of two ancient martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius. The relics of these were removed, and transported to their more worthy destination, and St. Augustine,* St. Ambrose, and Paulinus, (the secretary and biographer of St. Ambrose), attest various miracles of healing which ensued.

“The miracle,” says St. Augustine, “which occurred at Milan when I was there, when a blind man gained sight, was of a kind to come to the knowledge of many, because the city is large and the emperor was there at the time, and it was wrought with the witness of a vast multitude.”

This is not the place to enter into the question of the credibility of these miracles; sufficient is it to say, that they stand as matter of belief in the Catholic Church; and certainly, however it may be, there was a deep impression created by them among the people. To this even Gibbon testifies, saying, “Their effect on the minds of the people, was rapid

* Conf. bk. 9, VII. 16.

and irresistible; and the feeble sovereign of Italy found himself unable to contend with the favourite of heaven.”*

Political events too, made the empress desirous of the friendship of the bishop. His services were again required as ambassador; for Maximus, trusting in the success he had hitherto met with, and considering it as a token of further prosperity, indulged his ambitious longings, and prepared to invade Italy. Once more accordingly the reverend envoy, in all the charity which belongs to the true disciple of Christ, undertook the defence of his enemies, for such Justina and her son had proved themselves, and appeared before the tyrant.

St. Ambrose spoke with calm openness and freedom, reproaching him with his crimes, and urging him to cease from his ambitious projects. But this time the ambassador failed, and received an insulting dismissal. The young emperor was persuaded to send another envoy—Domninus,—one of his courtiers. He was however soon outwitted by Maximus; and on returning to Italy, a number of the usurper's troops accompanied him, under pretext of shewing respect to Valentinian's minister; but in reality to gain possession of the passages over the Alps. The stratagem succeeded, and Maximus entered Italy, ravaging the country as he went.

* Decl. and Fall, ch. 27.

Justina and her son fled to Thessalonica, and put themselves under the protection of the Emperor Theodosius. He immediately went to them, and after admonishing the royal fugitives that they should esteem this calamity as a chastisement for their persecutions of the Catholic Church,* took arms against the usurper, and advanced upon him so rapidly, that Maximus had scarcely time to close the gates of Aquileia, in which city he took refuge, (having been driven from his camp at Siscia, in Pannonia), before Theodosius was under its walls. Aquileia was soon taken; and the wretched Maximus, losing all his popularity, even among his soldiers, was made prisoner by Theodosius, who caused him to be beheaded (A.D. 388), and thus peace was restored to the western empire.

* Sozomen, bk v. chap. 15.

CHAPTER IV.

Behold your armoury! sword and lightning shaft,
Culled from the stores of God's all-judging ire,
And in your wielding left.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

Let not the reverence of any man cause thee to fall,
And refrain not to speak, when there is occasion to do good.

ECCLES. IV. 22-23.

AMBROSE AND THEODOSIUS—MASSACRE OF THESSALONICA—
AMBROSE'S LETTER TO THE EMPEROR—HE COMES TO THE
CHURCH—THEODOSIUS' PENITENCE—CHARACTER OF THEO-
DOSIUS.

THEODOSIUS repaired to Milan, and now St. Ambrose was called upon to use the same apostolical vigour and firmness towards this able and dignified conqueror, as he had before displayed in dealing with the weak and childish Valentinian.

A contention had arisen at Callinicum in Osroene, between the Jews and Christians, in which the synagogue had been burned by the latter. In his displeasure, Theodosius commanded that the bishop of Callinicum should rebuild the Jewish place of

worship. This met with opposition from St. Ambrose, who, whilst condemning the violent action, yet maintained that Christian gold could not be employed in raising a temple for the enemies of Christianity. After some hesitation, Theodosius yielded.

But a greater offence was soon to come under Ambrose's discipline.

In the year 390, a tumult occurred in Thessalonica, in which several imperial officers were murdered, amongst others, Botheric, the representative of the emperor. Theodosius, the irritability of whose temper formed one of his greatest faults, was furious on receiving the intelligence, and would have instantly condemned the offending city to destruction, but for the interposition of St. Ambrose, who left him having obtained a promise of mercy.

But after the departure of the bishop, Rufinus, and other courtiers, persuaded the emperor that he was shewing great weakness in thus a second time leaving such outrages unpunished,* and at last induced him to issue a command for a most barbarous and fearful massacre.

There is something peculiarly atrocious and revolting in this butchery; the unsuspecting Thessalonians

* It was not long since Theodosius had, at the petition of Flavianus, pardoned Antioch for her revolt.

were invited to the circus, as though games were to be given, and when it was full, the troops entered, and for three hours, the most horrible slaughter ensued, neither age nor sex finding mercy. Several tragical stories are told of this massacre ; one especially of a father who offered his own life for that of one of his two sons, both of whom were seized for execution : the soldiers consented ; but the unhappy parent could not decide which child to save at the expense of the other, and the impatient executioners murdered both before his eyes.* It is said that seven thousand persons fell victims to the emperor's wrath.

Shortly afterwards Theodosius entered Milan,—and at another time the bishop would have presented himself before him ; now, however, Ambrose left the city, only writing to the emperor as follows :—

“To the august Emperor Theodosius, Ambrose Bishop.—A deed has been perpetrated in Thessalonica, which has no parallel in history, which I in vain endeavoured to prevent. When the news came I was engaged in a synod—all assembled deplored it—none viewed it leniently. . . . Oh! emperor, why should you feel shame to act as David acted—he who was a prophet as well as a king, and forefather of Christ according to the flesh? A parable was

* Sozomen, bk. vii. chap. 25.

set before him, and when he found that by it he himself was condemned, he said, 'I have sinned before the Lord.' Take it not ill then, oh emperor, if the same words are used towards you as the prophet used towards David : 'Thou art the man !' For if you give due attention to them, and answer 'I have sinned before the Lord'; if you utter that royal and prophetic strain, 'Oh come let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker': then it will be said to you, 'Since it repenteth thee, the Lord putteth away thy sin, thou shalt not die.'

"I have written this to induce you by a royal example to put away this sin from your kingdom—that is, by humbling your soul to God. You are a man; temptation has come upon you—get the better of it. Tears and penitence are the only remedy for sin ; neither angel nor archangel can take it away : the Lord Himself, Who alone can say, 'I am with you always,' even He pardons not except the penitent. "I intreat, I demand, I exhort, I admonish; you have my love, my affection, my prayers. If you have confidence in me, obey me, and allow what I say : if not, make allowance for what I do—in that I prefer God to my sovereign."*

Theodosius replied by coming to the church, to which Ambrose had returned.

* Translation in the Church of the Fathers.

The bishop met the emperor at the porch, and sternly addressed him :—" Surely your majesty does not reflect on the heinousness of the guilt which you have incurred? Passion is over, yet reason does not yet extenuate the crime. Perchance kingly rule is an obstacle to repentance, and sovereignty impedes reflection. Yet were it well to feel the perishable nature of man, and remember that dust is his beginning and his end, in spite of that gorgeous purple which may beguile the heart, but cannot change the frailty of the frame it covers.

"Your subjects, emperor, are your fellow-creatures, I should rather say, your fellow-servants—servants of one universal Lord and King, the Maker of the universe. Dare you, then, look upon His shrine, Who is Lord of high as well as low? Dare you tread His holy pavement? Dare you stretch forth hands, which are yet reeking with the blood of innocent victims? Dare you receive in them the most holy Body of your Lord? Dare you taste His precious Blood with lips which have commanded an unjust slaughter? Go hence: add not a new offence to what is past; submit to the bond which is placed upon you according to the Will of the Most High. Take it as medicine to restore your soul."*

* Ambrose. Epis. 51, translation in Church of the Fathers, and Theodoret, bk. v. chap. 18.

Conscious of his guilt, and trembling before the holy man of God, Theodosius offered as an extenuation, that David, the chosen of the Lord, had committed both adultery and murder.

He received for answer, "If you have sinned like him; be like him also in your repentance."*

In heaviness and confusion Theodosius returned to his palace; and for eight months his mourning garb bespoke externally the contrition and grief he felt internally. The glad season of Christmas arrived, but the imperial offender could not share in the joy which was experienced by the humblest of his subjects; the ban of the Church was upon him; nor might he alone of all the city, approach those sacred Mysteries, with which the great festival was celebrated.

Rufinus one day found his royal master sitting alone, and in tears; and inquiring whence their cause, Theodosius replied, "How should it be otherwise? Servants and beggars may freely go into the house of God, and pour out their prayers to Heaven—but to me the gates of heaven are shut: I cannot forget our Saviour's words: 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven.'" Rufinus volunteered to appeal to Ambrose for a relaxation of his severity. "No," said the emperor,

* Butler.

“you will never be able to persuade Ambrose ; I know the justness of the sentence he has passed, and that he will never, out of reverence to the imperial dignity, betray the commands of God.”*

Rufinus however prevailed on the emperor to let him make the attempt, and went to the bishop, who reproached him in his turn with his share in the Thessalonian massacre. Rufinus sued for pardon in humble terms, and said that the emperor would shortly present himself.

“If so,” replied St. Ambrose, “I tell you plainly I shall forbid him to enter the church door.”

Rufinus hastened back in order to spare Theodosius the humiliation of a second repulse ; but his impatience had made him hasten, and the unsuccessful envoy met the emperor on his way. Having heard the bishop’s answer, Theodosius nobly said :—
“I will proceed, and undergo the shame I have justly deserved.”

St. Ambrose’s apartments were connected with the basilica, and it was to these that the royal penitent repaired, and finding his stern judge, earnestly applied for absolution. Theodosius began by saying humbly : “I do not oppose the laws of the Church, nor would I enter the sacred doors contrary to your injunctions ; but I beseech you, in consideration of

* Theodoret, bk. v. chap. 18.

the mercy of our common Lord, to unloose me from these bonds, and not to shut against me the door which is opened by Him to all who truly repent."

"What signs of penitence do you give?" inquired the priest. "With what medicines have you cured your wounds?" "It is your part," replied the emperor, "to prescribe the remedy, to mix the ingredients, to apply the plaster: mine to submit and comply with the prescriptions."*

Ambrose could desire no more; and having exacted a promise that Theodosius would henceforward cause thirty days to elapse between giving and executing a sentence—and having enjoined upon him a public penance, he pronounced absolution; and entering the basilica, in the presence of the congregation, the emperor prostrated himself, crying out in the words of another royal penitent, "My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken Thou me, according to Thy word."

"This," says Milman, "was the culminating point of pure Christian influence; Christianity appeared before the world as the champion and vindicator of outraged humanity; as having founded a tribunal of justice, which extended its protective authority over the meanest, and suspended its retributive penalties over the mightiest of mankind."†

* Theod. bk. v. chap. 18. † Hist. of Christianity, bk. iii.

And we should do well to remember, that he who thus so submissively humbled himself before God as present in His Church, was no weak, or effeminate, or superstitious man, whose fears could be easily worked upon. Theodosius well deserved the surname of the Great.* The encomiums bestowed

* The parents of Theodosius were Christians; he himself was baptized by Ascholius, Bishop of Thessalonica, on occasion of a severe illness which he had at that city, where he had gone after defeating the barbarians who had inundated the Eastern provinces. Ascholius was a zealous adherent to the Nicene doctrine, and imparted the same fervour to his royal disciple.—Vide Sozomen, bk. vii. chap. 4. Sozomen and Theodoret both relate a story concerning Theodosius, characteristic of the times. The emperor had hesitated to pronounce as decided a disapproval of the Arian doctrine as the orthodox bishops desired. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, accordingly sought to give him a practical exposition of the Catholic tenets concerning the Holy Trinity. The emperor's son, Arcadius, had recently been elevated to a share in his father's empire, and when the court assembled, he sat by Theodosius in the place of dignity. But without heeding this, Amphilochius having saluted the emperor, took no notice of Arcadius. Theodosius remarked upon this neglect with displeasure; when the bishop replied, "You, O emperor, cannot endure to see any want of respect manifested towards your son; reflect then upon the wrath of the Heavenly Father against those who do not honour His Son as Himself, but audaciously assert that the Son is inferior to the Father." Theodosius received this reproof in the spirit of a Christian, and enforced the regulations required of him to repress the Arian heresy.—Theodoret, bk. v. and Sozomen, bk. vii.

upon him by Tillemont may be considered partial, for his conduct as a member of the Church must make his memory dear to all her sons ; but we find Gibbon, who certainly had no such sympathy, speaking of Theodosius in terms of the highest panegyric. "The wisdom of his laws and the success of his arms, rendered his administration respectable, both in the eyes of his subjects and of his enemies. He loved and practised the virtues of domestic life. The proud titles of imperial greatness were adorned by the tender names of a faithful husband, an indulgent father His familiar friends were selected from among those persons who, in the equal intercourse of private life, had appeared before his eyes without a mask ; the consciousness of personal and superior merit enabled him to despise the accidental distinction of the purple ; and he proved by his conduct, that he had forgotten all the injuries, while he most gratefully remembered all the services and favours, which he had received before he ascended the throne of the Roman Empire. . . . Theodosius respected the simplicity of the good and virtuous. . . . The government of a mighty empire may assuredly suffice to occupy the time and the abilities of a mortal, yet the diligent prince always reserved some moments of his leisure for reading. History, which enlarged his experience, was his favourite study. . . . His disinterested opinion of past events was usefully

applied as the rule of his own actions ; and Theodosius has deserved the singular commendation, that his virtues always seemed to expand with his fortunes.”*

Whether at this time, or previously, is a contested point, but on one occasion, when the Communion was about to be celebrated, Theodosius having made his offering remained within the chancel, a privilege conceded to the imperial rank by the Eastern Church. Such, however, was not the case in the sister Church, and St. Ambrose sent a message to Theodosius, desiring him to take his place in the congregation, adding that, “though the purple made men emperors, it did not make them priests.”†

The emperor instantly obeyed, earnestly expressing that it was no arrogance that had made him assume this position, but that he was following the Eastern custom.

When returned to Constantinople, Theodosius remembered the lesson he had learned at Milan, and remained without the chancel, when Nectarius‡ (St. Chrysostom’s predecessor on the episcopal throne of

* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, chap. 27.

† Theodoret, bk. v. chap. 18.

‡ The most striking characteristic of Nectarius seems to have been his almost excessive mildness and suavity of manners, so that his rule was not sufficient for the control of his Church in troublous times.

Constantinople) sent to desire that he would take his usual place. Theodosius refused to do so, exclaiming, that he had found but one man to set him right and tell him the truth; "I know but one true bishop in the world, and this is Ambrose!"* Nor would the monarch ever again take the place conceded to his rank.

* Butler.

CHAPTER V.

"The fathers are in dust, yet live to God:"

So says the Truth; as if the motionless clay
Still held the seeds of life beneath the sod,
Smouldering and struggling till the judgment day.

And hence we learn with reverence to esteem
Of these frail houses, though the grave confines;
Sophist may urge his cunning tests, and deem
That they are earth;—but they are heavenly shrines.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

JOVINIAN HERESY—THE PRISCILLIANITES—VALENTINIAN II.
—HE IS MURDERED BY ARBOGASTES—DEATH OF THEODO-
SIUS—AMBROSE'S LAST ILLNESS—HIS DEATH.

THE Synod over which St. Ambrose was presiding, when the massacre of Thessalonica occurred, was held for the purpose of examining the heretical opinions propagated by Jovinian, a Roman monk, who had already been condemned in Rome, and now met the same fate at Milan.

This is perhaps the fittest place in which to mention St. Ambrose's strong opposition to the persecutions which the usurper Maximus inflicted upon the

Priscillianites, a sect, of whose doctrine no one could have stronger abhorrence ; but Ambrose united with St. Martin of Tours (whose memory is scarcely less celebrated than his own) in protesting against the attempt to extirpate heresy with the sword.*

But their merciful efforts proved unavailing, and Priscillian and some of his followers were the first who were judicially executed for their religious opinions.

Theodosius, on his return to the East, left Valentinian upon his throne in Milan, and this young prince gave evidence by his filial affection and obedience to Ambrose, that he had been but a tool in the hands of Justina, when his name had been used as the bishop's enemy.

Valentinian's character would probably have ripened, had he lived, into greatness. "The pernicious attachment to the Arian sect, which Valentinian had imbibed from Justina's example and instructions, was soon erased by the lessons of a more orthodox education. His growing zeal for

* "The Church having once denounced a doctrine as false, left it to the conscience of the state to prevent its dissemination ; but she abhorred cruelty and bloodshed, and denied the state's right of taking direct cognizance of error, and of punishing it as such, or otherwise than as an offence against herself, the divinely-appointed teacher of the Faith."—*Church of the Fathers*, chap. 21.

the faith of Nice, and his filial reverence for the character and authority of Ambrose, disposed the Catholics to entertain the most favourable opinions of the virtues of the young emperor. They applauded his temperance, his contempt of pleasure, his application to business, and his tender affection for his two sisters.”*

But Arbogastes, the master-general of the armies of Gaul, conspired against his young master, and gradually filled every post around him with creatures of his own.

From Vienne, in Gaul, where Valentinian was held in a sort of honourable captivity, he secretly applied to Theodosius for assistance, and likewise to St. Ambrose, whom he entreated to come to him, and admit him to the baptismal font; and, as though fearing that this wish should not be gratified, he would frequently exclaim, “Shall I be so happy as to see my father!”†

Both Theodosius and Ambrose prepared to comply with the request of one who was as a son to them; but before either could reach him, the unhappy prince was murdered by Arbogastes. St. Ambrose had reached the foot of the Alpine pass by which he intended to cross into Gaul, when he received the melancholy intelligence, and sadly returned to Milan,

* Decline and Fall, chap. 27.

† Butler.

where he conducted the funeral obsequies of his royal disciple, and sought to console his young sisters.

Arbogastes raised Eugenius to the vacant throne, as a cover to his own ambitious designs; but in a campaign, the details of which would occupy too much space here, Theodosius completely defeated the rebels; Eugenius was taken prisoner and beheaded, and Arbogastes, finding his cause desperate, perished by his own sword.

St. Ambrose met the victorious emperor at Aquileia, and Theodosius, kneeling before his friend and pastor, requested his benediction, acknowledging that all his victories proceeded from the Mercy and Power of God, and Him only.

But even at this time disease was at work upon the truly great emperor, and soon it became evident that the time was near at hand when he was to quit the world in which he had borne so conspicuous a part. Theodosius summoned his sons to Milan, and after giving them various admonitions as to their conduct, he turned to Ambrose, saying: "These are the truths which you have taught me, and which I myself have experienced. Do you continue to teach my children, even as you have taught me." St. Ambrose promised to do so, and expressed a hope, that the teachable spirit of the father might descend to the sons.

The holy bishop continued a constant attendant

upon the dying emperor, who breathed his last early in the year 395, at the age of fifty. St. Ambrose pronounced his funeral oration.

But as death spares not emperors, so it spares not priests. Theodosius had done his part; now it remained for the brave and holy Ambrose to do his. The sand was already running out. Two years after Theodosius's death he continued to rule the Church of Milan, and was even more active than usual in all his sacred offices; but in the beginning of the year 397 he expressed his strong conviction that his end was approaching, saying at the same time, that he thought he should live till Easter.

The last of his compositions, an exposition of the forty-third Psalm, remains unfinished; he was dictating it to his secretary, Paulinus, when his mortal sickness came on. Great affliction was felt, not only in his diocese, but wherever the fame of Ambrose had reached, when it was known that he lay on his deathbed; and Stilicho, the prime minister of the Emperor Honorius, said, "The day that this great man dies, destruction hangs over Italy."*

Knowing that, like St. Paul, Ambrose would have a "desire to depart and be with Christ," and yet feeling that to "abide in the flesh" was "needful" for them, the principal members of his flock went to-

* Cave and Butler.

gether to him, and surrounding his bed, with tears they besought Ambrose to pray that for their sakes his life might be prolonged. But he only replied: "I have not so behaved myself among you that I should be ashamed to live longer; nor am I afraid to die, because I have so good a Master."

Some of St. Ambrose's clergy were talking of who should succeed him, being as they thought quite out of his hearing, but nevertheless St. Ambrose caught the name of Simplicianus, his former master, and always his friend, and astonished the speakers not a little by exclaiming—"He is old, but a good man."

To the Bishop of Lodi, who was attending on him, he said, that as he prayed, he saw Jesus Christ smiling upon him. On the day of his departure the saint lay for some hours with his hands folded crosswise, and though his voice was inaudible, the attendants saw his lips moving in prayer. Honoratus, Bishop of Vercelli, administered the Eucharist to him, and during the night of Easter-eve his happy spirit fled to the mansions of rest.

Thus closed the career of one of the most successful of the Church's warriors. Though the station that he filled was so exalted, and his triumphs over monarchs so glorious, yet at no time does he seem to have been under the influence of personal pride or self-exaltation. "All the successes, and all the glory that God permitted to St. Ambrose," says

Tillemont, "served only to augment his humility. He rather sought to conceal the gifts that were bestowed on him, and grew daily in faith and charity before God and man. Instead of boasting how the Lord had delivered him from perils and dangers; he humbly said, that God denied to him the crown of martyrdom, after which he so earnestly longed, because He saw him unworthy of it." *

Sometimes when informed of the death of any good bishop, or other person of eminent piety, he would weep, but not because they had left this world, but rather for envy, that they had attained their goal, and he had yet to run his course.

Although St. Ambrose was so inflexible in all matters of discipline, yet he was invariably kind and paternal in his manner. In one of his letters to Theodosius he says: "He who loves most truly re-proves most freely; and the more I esteem a person, the more earnestly do I speak the truth to him, even at the risk of offending him."

St. Augustine says of his mother, that "she loved him (St. Ambrose) as an angel of God,"† and it is hardly to be supposed that so many, both high and low, would have clung so affectionately to him, had they not felt that he was truly a father to them.

His writings were numerous, and till just before

* Vie de S. Ambroise, Ar. 48.

† Conf. bk. vi. 3.

his death, we are told by Paulinus, that he wrote them all with his own hand.

On Easter Day the earthly remains of the great Ambrose were removed into the church which bears his name, and he was buried beneath the altar. His memory is still cherished ; the Roman Church celebrates the 7th of December, the anniversary of his ordination, while the English Church has appointed the 4th of April for his commemoration, supposing that to have been the date of his death. But Ambrose will be remembered by both Churches, nay, by all Churches, with gratitude and veneration, as long as Christianity endures; for, as it has been beautifully observed,—“The Church neither forgets her departed saints, nor deems that they are severed from her fellowship. The communion of saints is a part of her baptismal faith, and though hid from the eyes, she knows they are nigh in spirit. She commemorates them with thanksgivings, and commends them to God’s keeping as her precious treasures. She fondly cherishes the remembrance of their words and deeds, of their gentleness and purity ; she rejoices over them with a sorrowful gladness, as a mother musing over departed children ; she can no longer behold them, and break bread with them, but she can prolong their presence by the vivid recollection of their beloved image, and by the consciousness of an united adoration ; she knows that while

she tarried praying without, they were but within the precinct of an inner court, nearer to the Eternal Throne. . . . They are not severed, but out of sight. The communion of saints is still one. Nothing is changed but the visible relations of an earthly life. . . . The unity of the Saints on earth with the Church unseen is the closest bond of all. Hell has no power over it; sin cannot blight it; schism cannot rend it; death itself can but knit it more strongly. Nothing is changed but the relation of sight; like as when the head of a far-stretching procession, winding through a broken hollow land, hides itself in some bending vale; it is still all one; all advancing together; they that are farthest onward in the way are conscious of their lengthened following; they that linger with the last are drawn forward, as it were, by the attraction of the advancing multitude. Even so we are ever moving on, ever pressing on beyond the bounds of this material world. The life of the Church is one and indivisible; there is but one energy of spiritual being in which all are united, all are nourished by the same hidden manna, all slake their thirst in the same waters of life.* Yes,—and our Church, in the Eucharistic service, faithfully holds the doctrine of this “Communion of

* The Commemoration of the faithful departed.—Arch-deacon Manning.

the Saints." Thus she prays: "We also bless Thy holy name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear, beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good example, that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom."

ST. AUGUSTINE.

As when the sun hath climb'd a cloudy mass,
And looks at noon on some cathedral dim,
Each limb, each fold, in the translucent glass,
Breaks into hues of radiant Seraphim ;

So, sainted Bishop ! in the letter'd store
Which still enfolds thy spirit fled from sight,
Comment, prayer, homily, or learned lore,
Christ bathes each part with His transforming light

Late ris'n in thee. Thence all is eloquent
With flowing sweetness ! o'er each rising pause
Thou build'st in untir'd strength : through all is sent
The Word, pleading for His most righteous laws.

For thy sick soul, by Baptism's seal reliev'd,
Deep in her brackish founts the healing Cross receiv'd.

THE CATHEDRAL.



LIFE OF ST. AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO.

CHAPTER I.

In early days the conscience has in most
A quickness, which in later life is lost;
Preserved from guilt by salutary fears,
Or guilty, soon relenting into tears:
Too careless often, as our years proceed,
What friends we sort with, or what books we read.
. . . . Taught at schools much mythologic stuff,
But sound religion sparingly enough.

COWPER.

CHARACTER OF AUGUSTINE—HIS CONFESSIONS—HIS BIRTH—
PATRICIUS AND MONICA—AUGUSTINE WHEN ILL DESIRES
BAPTISM—HIS EDUCATION—EARLY FAULTS—HIS STUDIES
—AUGUSTINE DEPRECATES TOO EXCLUSIVELY CLASSIC
STUDIES.

No one, perhaps, of the many holy bishops and saints of the Church, has excited more general attention, or elicited more sincere affection and admiration, than St. Augustine, whose life we now approach.

One principal cause of this is to be found, no doubt, in the feeling of sympathy established between him and the readers of his "Confessions," which being the outpourings of a deeply religious mind, under strong pressure of temptation and sin, must naturally find an echo in many breasts. It is truly said, that "there is a charm in seeing ourselves reflected"; and we may indulge a charitable hope, that some of those who have seen their sin reflected in the mirror held up by this saint, have not stopped there, but beheld not as a shadow only, but in substance, a repentance as full of good works as his.

"Augustine, by the extraordinary adaptation of his genius to his own age, the comprehensive grandeur of his views, the intense earnestness of his character, his inexhaustible activity, the vigour, warmth, and perspicuity of his style, had a right to command the homage of Western Christendom. He was at once the first, universal, and the greatest and most powerful of the Christian Latin writers.

"The gentleness of his childhood, the passions of his youth, the studies of his adolescence, the wilder dreams of his immature Christianity, the Manicheism, the intermediate state of Platonism, through which he passed into orthodoxy; the fervor with which he embraced, the vigour with which he developed, the unhesitating confidence with which he enforced his final creed; all affected, more or less,

the general mind. His 'Confessions' became the manual of all those who were forced by their temperament, or inclined by their disposition, to brood over the inward sensations of their own minds; to trace within themselves all the trepidations, the misgivings, the agonies, the exultations of the religious conscience; the gradual formation of opinions, till they harden into dogmas, or warm into objects of ardent passion. . . . Men shrunk from the divine and unapproachable image of Christian perfection in the life of the Redeemer, to the more earthly, more familiar picture of the development of the Christian character, crossed with the light and shade of human weakness and human passion."*

"The Confessions," says the editor of the English translation, "have ever been a favourite Christian study . . . and are of deep interest, presenting, as they do, an account of the way in which God led, perhaps the most powerful mind of Christian antiquity, out of darkness into light, and changed one, who was a chosen vessel unto Himself, from a heretic and seducer of the brethren, into one of the most energetic defenders of Catholic truth. . . . His proposed subject apparently was God's protection and guidance, through all his infirmities and errors, to Baptism, wherein all his transgressions were blotted

* Milman.

out ; that so others, who were in the same state in which he had been, might ‘not sleep in despair and say, I cannot.’ ”*

St. Augustine was born November 13, A.D. 354, at Targaste, a small town of Numidia, in Africa, within the diocese of Hippo. His family seems to have been one of high respectability, but of no great wealth. His father, Patricius, was a heathen, and although possessed of many worldly virtues, and devoted to the welfare of his children, yet he seems to have been devoid of that pre-eminently Christian virtue, a meek and quiet spirit; and his hasty temper caused frequent pain to his wife Monica, whose pure and holy character has made her worthy of being reckoned among the saints. It is to her unceasing affection and vigilance, and still more to her fervent prayers, we may, under the blessing of the Almighty, attribute the final arrival of her son, after so long wandering, at the haven where he would be. He himself says to her,—“You, through whose prayers I undoubtingly believe and affirm, that God gave me that mind that I should prefer nothing to the discovery of truth ;—wish, think of, love, nought besides . . . to whom I owe all which in me is life.”

Augustine loves to dwell upon the excellencies of his mother, and describes her as even in childhood

* Preface to the Confessions of St. Augustine.

practising Christian patience and self-denial, which lessons she acquired under the wise and prudent care of an old nurse, who truly held that Monica's happiness and moral character in after life greatly depended upon the cultivation of such virtues in these first years; so that her troubles in married life she bore meekly, winning the affection of all who approached her.

To her highly cultivated understanding, he, who was so able a judge, bears witness, speaking of her "endowments, and the fervour of her mind towards divine things . . . and in a discussion on a matter of no small moment, her mind had appeared to me of so high an order, that nothing could be more adapted to the study of true wisdom."* He also mentions her "ardent love of the Divine Scriptures."

Nor were her pious wishes finally disappointed, though destined to be long in their fulfilment, and after many years of prayer; for before his death, Patricius became a Christian and was baptized, and Augustine says, that "she had not to complain of that in him as a believer, which before he was a believer she had borne from him."†

Patricius and Monica had several children besides Augustine; the only two specified are Navigius and a daughter who was abbess of a religious institu-

* Note to the Confessions.

† Confessions, bk. ix. 22.

tion in Hippo, when her brother presided there as bishop.

Augustine does not seem to have entertained the opinion so often expressed, that boyhood is the happiest part of a man's life. He speaks of his passage from infancy to childhood as being "launched deeper into the stormy intercourse of human life"; and the childish sorrows which his elders laughed at, were a heavy burden upon him. His school days were not happy. "What miseries did I now experience, when obedience to my teachers was proposed to me, as proper in a boy, in order that in this world I might prosper and excel in tongue science, which should serve to the praise of men, and to deceitful riches. Next I was put to school to get learning, in which I, poor wretch, knew not what use there was; and yet, if idle in learning, I was beaten."* There is something very pathetic in Augustine's earnest prayers to God that he might not be beaten at school; betokening how fully, even then, he realized an Almighty Power, caring even for the least and youngest. His chief juvenile failing seems to have been idleness; he did not want memory or capacity; but he says that his sole delight was play, and his high spirit made him always long to be first in every boyish game.

* Confessions, book i. ix. 14.

Monica meanwhile watched over her little son with the tenderest care. Soon after his birth she had entered him among the catechumens, as was customary in the Western Churches; and while he was quite a child, being seized with a sudden and dangerous illness, at his own earnest desire preparations were made for his Baptism; but he recovered, and the holy rite was postponed. Of this St. Augustine says: "And so, as if I must needs be again polluted should I live, my cleansing was deferred, because the defilements of sin would, after that washing, bring greater and more perilous guilt."* And he deplores the habit, too frequent at that period, of deferring Baptism till late in life, because men were not ready or willing to turn from their sins, but reserved the purifying rite until such time as they should be satiated with the world and its pursuits. Would St. Augustine not find a somewhat similar error to reprove amongst ourselves, in the excuse offered by many who keep back from the other holy sacrament (that of the Eucharist) on the plea of not being fit, in other words, unwilling, to abandon their sinful habits?

Patricius, who probably saw great promise in his son, urged forward his education most eagerly, but he "loved not study, and hated to be forced to it";

* Confessions, book i. xi. 17.

reading, writing, and arithmetic were irksome to him, and so was Greek, but in the Latin classics he took great delight, which very delight he deprecates. "For what more miserable than a miserable being who commiserates not himself; weeping the death of Dido for love to Æneas, but weeping not his own death for want of love to Thee, oh God! Thou Light of my heart; Thou Bread of my inmost soul; Thou Power Who givest vigour to my mind, Who quickenest my thoughts, I loved Thee not. . . . And yet I wept not for this, I who wept for Dido slain. One and one, two; two and two, four; this was to me a hateful sing-song: the wooden horse, lined with armed men, and the burning of Troy, and Creusa's shade and sad similitude, were the choice spectacle of my vanity." *

St. Augustine strongly condemns the exclusive attention given to a classical education. "Woe is thee, thou torrent of human custom! Who shall stand against thee? How long shalt thou not be dried up? How long roll the sons of Eve into that huge and hideous ocean, which even they scarcely overpass who climb the Cross? . . . And yet, thou hellish torrent, into thee are cast the sons of men, with rich rewards for compassing such learning. . . . Behold, oh Lord God, yea behold patiently as Thou

* Confessions, book i. xv. 22.

art wont, how carefully the sons of men observe the covenanted rules of letters and syllables received from those who spake before them, neglecting the eternal covenant of everlasting salvation received from Thee.”* And he laments over the lessons of profligacy and worldliness inculcated in these studies, which had an evil effect upon his own mind; for “I was,” he says, “with innumerable lies deceiving my tutor, my masters, my parents, from love of play, &c. Thefts also I committed from my parents’ cellar and table, enslaved by greediness. . . . In my play, too, I often sought unfair conquests, conquered myself meanwhile by vain desire of pre-eminence. And what could I so ill endure, or when I detected it, upbraided I so fiercely, as that I was doing to others? and for which, if detected, I was upbraided, I chose rather to quarrel than to yield. . . . And is this the innocence of boyhood? Not so, Lord, not so. For these very sins, as riper years succeed, these very sins are transferred from tutors and masters, from nuts and balls and sparrows, to magistrates and kings, to gold and manors and slaves, just as severer punishments replace the cane.”†

Yet even at this time Augustine had, as we have seen, a strong conviction of God’s Allseeing Presence, and passionate yearnings after the great, the

* Confes. xvi. 25 ; xviii. 29.

† Ibid. bk. i. xviii. 30.

good, and the beautiful; but he sought these in the creature, not the Creator, and found only bitterness. "Thou hast commanded," he says, "and so it is, that every inordinate affection should be its own punishment."

Patricius made great sacrifices to send his son to Madaura, a neighbouring city, that he might have greater advantages in learning grammar and rhetoric. "Yet this same father had no concern how I grew before God," says Augustine. He did not remain long at Madaura, seemingly because at that time his father was unable to furnish funds for Augustine's education; but returning home at the age of sixteen, gave himself up to idleness and vice; and though Monica trembled at her child's danger, Patricius rather gloried in the manliness and high spirit he shewed. One of his juvenile sins at this time committed, was robbing a neighbouring orchard, aided by a party of his young companions, more for love of the exploit, than for any desire of the fruit, which he tells us was so bad, that they were only given to the swine to eat.

St. Augustine dwells with deep sorrow and contrition on these years of sinfulness, and says: "I will love Thee, oh Lord, and thank Thee, and confess unto Thy Name, because Thou hast forgiven me these so great and heinous deeds of mine. To Thy Grace I ascribe it, and Thy Mercy, that Thou hast

melted away my sins as it were ice. To Thy Grace I ascribe also whatsoever I have not done of evil; for what might I not have done? What man is he, who, weighing his own infirmity, dares to ascribe his purity and innocence to his own strength; that so he should love Thee the less, as if he had less needed Thy Mercy, whereby Thou remitted sins to those that turn to Thee? For whosoever, called by Thee, followed Thy Voice, and avoided those things which he reads me confessing of myself, let him not scorn me, who being sick, was cured by that Physician, through Whose aid it was that he was not, or rather was less sick: and for this let him love Thee as much, and more, since by Whom he sees me to have been recovered from such deep consumption of sin; by Him he sees himself to have been from the like consumption of sin preserved. Thus I sank away from Thee, and I wandered too much astray from Thee, my God, in these days of my youth, and I became to myself a barren land.”*

* Confessions, book ii. vii. 15.

CHAPTER II.

And Death and Life he hated equally,
And nothing saw for his despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity—
No comfort anywhere :
Remaining utterly confused with fears,
And ever worse with growing time.

TENNYSON.

PATRICIUS DIES—AUGUSTINE GOES TO CARTHAGE—TEACHES RHETORIC THERE—STUDIES CICERO AND THE SCRIPTURES—BECOMES A MANICHEE—RETURNS HOME—MONICA'S ANXIETY ON HIS BEHALF—DEATH OF HIS FRIEND—AUGUSTINE'S GRIEF—GOES TO CARTHAGE AGAIN—FAUSTUS ARRIVES THERE—AUGUSTINE SEES THE FALSITY OF MANICHEISM—GOES TO ROME—HIS ILLNESS.

In the year 371 Patricius died, and about the same time Augustine removed to Carthage in pursuit of eloquence and rhetoric, now his avowed profession, and here he plunged into all the excitement and dissipation which a large city offered him.

Yet Augustine was not happy; restless longings filled his mind; "within me was a famine of that inward food, Thyself, my God."* He was

* Confessions, book iii. i. 1.

“Sick at heart,
Sick of a world with nought to win
To fill that urn within.”*

One of his favourite amusements was the theatre, and the more exciting the performances, the more they gratified his feverish temperament. “That acting,” he says, “best pleased me, and attracted me most vehemently, which drew tears from me.”†

His studies were no longer distasteful to him, and Augustine was not a little proud and arrogant of being chief in the school of rhetoric, his associates being mostly young men of very dissipated habits; so that even at this time, though delighting in their society, Augustine shrunk with abhorrence from their vice.

But in the course of study, a book of Cicero’s—“Hortensius”—fell into Augustine’s hands, and its philosophy captivated him greatly, and gave a more exalted turn to his pursuits. To use his own words—“This book altered my affections, and turned my prayers to Thyself, O Lord, and made me have other purposes and desires. Every vain hope at once became worthless to me, and I longed with an incredibly burning desire for an immortality of wisdom, and began now to arise, that I might return to Thee.”‡

* Recollections of Childhood.—Rev. I. Williams.

† Confessions, book iii. ii. 4.

‡ Ibid. book iii. iv. 7.

But the pure lessons of Christianity which Monica had impressed upon her son, now bore their fruit. He was dissatisfied not to find the name of Christ; in other words, that Cicero's philosophy fell short of what he was aspiring after, and he turned from Hortensius to the Scriptures; but not yet with a mind humble and teachable, such as should be brought to this sacred study, and so they seemed to him not to be compared with the writings of Tully. "My swelling pride shrunk from their lowliness, nor could my sharp wit pierce the interior thereof; for I disdained to be a little one, and, swollen with pride, took myself to be a great one." And thus he fell into the Manichæan heresy.

It would be quite beyond the scope of this little work to enter into detail of the doctrines of Manes, the founder of this sect; the main feature was, however, that from eternity there had been two antagonist worlds, light and darkness, spirit and matter; God being identified with the former, and contemplated as one only of the antagonist powers. Our Saviour came on earth, not in real substance, but only apparently; and having returned to the kingdom of light, left His Paraclete, Manes, fully to open His Gospel to mankind. In due course of time, Manes taught, Light would predominate over and absorb Darkness, and the world would be dissolved in fire.

Such is a very imperfect sketch of some of the

leading features of this most fearful heresy, into which Augustine now fell. "Oh, Truth," he says, "how inwardly did the marrow of my soul pant after thee."*

In A.D. 376 Augustine returned to Targaste and set up a school of rhetoric; he and his natural son Adeodatus dwelling in Monica's house. Deep was the anguish felt by this excellent woman at the departure of her son from Catholic truth, so that she wept over him, more than mothers weep the bodily death of their children.† And at first she refused to live in the same house, or eat at the same table with Augustine; but in a dream she saw an angel of God, who, having learned the cause of her corroding grief, comforted her, telling her that where she was, her son should be also; and thenceforward "cheered with hope, yet no whit relaxing in her weeping and mourning," she received him, and looked forward to the time when light should be cast upon the darkness of his errors.

In the meantime Monica spared no efforts to reclaim her son from error, for which purpose she consulted a learned and pious bishop, entreating him to converse with Augustine, and shew him the falsity of the doctrines he held, and thus reclaim him. But the bishop, who was well versed in such

* Book i vi. 10.

† Book iii.

matters, replied, that at present Augustine was too much puffed up by his own learning, and too self-sufficient to profit by his admonitions; "But let him alone awhile," he said, "only pray God for him, he will of himself by reading find what that error is, and how great its impiety." Monica was but half satisfied, and renewed her entreaties and tears, that the bishop would see her son; till he, almost vexed with her importunity, dismissed her, saying, "Go thy ways, and God bless thee, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish."* And through the long years that elapsed before Augustine's conversion, these words dwelt in Monica's heart as a prophecy of better things to come.

Augustine did not remain long at Targaste, which became distasteful to him upon the death of his dearest friend; a calamity which was undoubtedly one of the gradual steps by which he was being led to the truth. He was now to learn a lesson of sorrow and suffering. This friend (whose name we do not know) was, he says, "but too dear to me, from a community of pursuits, of my own age, and as myself in the first opening flowers of youth. He had grown up from a child with me, and we had been both schoolfellows and playfellows. But he was not yet my friend as afterwards, nor even then as true

* Confessions, book iv. xii. 21.

friendship is; for true it cannot be, unless in such as Thou cementest together, cleaving unto Thee, by that love which is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which Thou hast given us. Yet was it but too sweet, ripened by the warmth of kindred studies.”*

This friend had imbibed from Augustine all his Manichæan notions, and they so loved one another, that Augustine says, “his soul could not be without him.”

“There was one whom I made my stay,
But Thou didst set him far away,
That I might courage take on Thee to lean ;
And lest I hang on earthly love,
Thou didst with sorrow me reprove,
And badest me to fix my love on Thee unseen.” †

This cherished friend lay dying in a fever, and, while insensible, was baptised, his parents probably being Christians. The Manichæans rejected the doctrine of baptism, ‡ and Augustine thought that his friend would despise the rite which had been administered. We give his own words : “But it proved far otherwise. As soon as I could speak

* Book iv. iv. 7.

† The Sacred City.

‡ “They held that baptism in water contributed nothing to the salvation of any, nor do they think that any of those whom they deceive should be baptized.”—*Note to the Conf.*

with him (I never left him, and we hung but too much upon each other), I essayed to jest with him, as though he would jest with me at that baptism which he had received when utterly absent in mind and feeling. . . . But he so shrunk from me, as from an enemy, and with a wonderful and sudden freedom bade me, as I would continue his friend, forbear such language to him." Augustine did not then pursue the subject, thinking that when his friend grew stronger, he would cast aside his superstitious notions; but God in His mercy willed that the baptismal garments with which he was freshly clothed should not be sullied by earth's contamination, for in a few days afterwards the fever increased, and the young convert died.

"At this grief," says Augustine, "my heart was utterly darkened; and whatever I beheld was death. My native country was a torment to me, and my father's house a strange unhappiness, and whatever I had shared with him, wanting him, became a distracting torture. Mine eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them; and I hated all places, for that they had him not; nor could they now tell me, 'he is coming,' as when he was alive and absent."*

But as yet Augustine knew not where to seek

* Confessions, book iv. rv. 9.

for consolation. He loved his earthly friend far better than his heavenly Master. He "wept most bitterly, and found repose in bitterness."*

Accordingly the young mourner sought to drown grief in sensual enjoyments; but neither "in calm groves, nor in games and music, nor in fragrant spots, nor in curious banquetings, nor in books and poesy," found he repose. Some temporary relief he found indeed in the whirl of excitement, but as soon as that was passed, "a huge load of misery" weighed him down. And then he moved to Carthage, and entering the schools as teacher of rhetoric, eagerly sought popular applause, and gave himself up to ambition; and as time passed by, the acuteness of his grief passed with it, so that little by little he became as before. In his Confessions St. Augustine speaks thus beautifully of the loss of friends: "Hence† that mourning if one die, and darkenings of sorrows, that steeping of the heart in tears, all sweetness turned to bitterness, and upon the loss of life of the dying, the death of the living. Blessed whoso loveth Thee, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee. For he alone loses none dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him who cannot be lost. And who is this but our God, the God who made heaven and earth? . . . Thee none loseth, but

* Conf. bk. iv. iv. 9. † Love being merely of the world.

who leaveth.”* And then he goes on to shew the right channel for love to flow in. “If bodies please thee, praise God on occasion of them, and turn back thy love upon their Maker, lest in these things which please thee thou displease. If souls please thee, be they loved in God; for they are too mutable, but in Him are they firmly established; else would they pass and pass away. In Him then be they beloved. . . . Stand with Him, and ye shall stand fast. Rest in Him, and ye shall be at rest. . . . The good that you love is from Him; but it is good and pleasant through reference to Him, and justly shall it be embittered, because unjustly is anything loved which is from Him, if He be forsaken for it.”†

While at Carthage Augustine wrote a book, entitled “*De Pulchro et Decoro*,” “On the Beautiful and Becoming.” It was the outpouring of his wandering brain, for strange ideas were “buzzing in the ears of his heart.”‡

He was devoted at this time to learning, and says that God having given him great quickness of understanding, and acuteness in discerning, he was able to comprehend whatever he took in hand, whether it were rhetoric, logic, geometry, music, or arithmetic; but of what avail was all this, while he

* Confessions, book. iv. ix. 14.

† Ibid. iv. xii. 18.

‡ Ibid. xv. 27.

was yet ignorant of that which alone could make him happy?

When Augustine was twenty-nine years of age, there came to Carthage one of the most eminent of the Manichæan sect, Faustus by name; a man remarkable for the winning plausibility of his eloquence, and well versed in the liberal sciences. Augustine, who had earnestly longed to meet this man, was by no means satisfied. All his science and eloquence could not give him peace; and he began to despair of finding that comfort and relief which he had expected. Speaking of this period, he says:—"Doth then, O Lord God of truth, whoso knoweth these things therefore please Thee? Surely, unhappy is he who knoweth all these, and knoweth not Thee; but happy whoso knoweth Thee, though he know not these. And whoso knoweth both Thee and them, is not the happier for them, but for Thee only; if, knowing Thee, he glorifies Thee as God, and is thankful, and becomest not vain in his imaginations. For as he is better off who knows how to possess a tree, and returns thanks to Thee for the use thereof, although he know not how many cubits high it is, or how wide it spreads, than he that can measure it, and count all its boughs, and neither owns it, nor knows or loves its Creator: so a believer, whose all this world of wealth is, and who, having nothing, yet possesseth all things by

cleaving unto Thee, Whom all things serve, though he know not even the circles of the Great Bear ; yet it is folly to doubt that he is in a better state than one who can measure the heavens, and number the stars, and poise the elements, yet neglecteth Thee, Who hast made all things in number, weight, and measure.”* Augustine elsewhere says: “Man must not blush to confess he knows not what he doth not know ; but while he feigns that he knoweth, he bringeth on himself never to know.”

Augustine's eyes were now opened to the errors of Manichæism ; but he had not found a substitute for that form of belief. Unsettled and restless, he resolved on going to Rome, in hopes there to find the happiness he had hitherto vainly sought.

The pious Monica opposed warmly her son's projected journey ; and followed him to the coast, hoping to dissuade him from undertaking it. But Augustine deceived her with a pretext of accompanying a friend to the vessel. “That night,” he says, “I privily departed ; but she was not behind in weeping and prayer. And what, O Lord, was she, with so many tears, asking of Thee, but that Thou wouldest not suffer me to sail ? But Thou, in the depth of Thy counsels, and hearing the main point of her desire, *regardest not what she then asked,*

* Confessions, book v. v. 7.

that Thou mightest make me what she ever asked. The wind blew and swelled our sails, and withdrew the shore from our sight; and she, on the morrow, was there, frantic with sorrow, and with complaints and groans filled Thine ears, who didst then disregard them; whilst, through my desires, Thou wert hurrying me to end all desire, and the earthly part of her affection to me was chastened by the allotted scourge of sorrows. For she loved my being with her, as mothers do, but much more than many; and she knew not how great joy Thou wert about to work for her out of my absence. She knew not: therefore did she weep and wail; and by this agony there appeared in her the inheritance of Eve, with sorrow seeking what in sorrow she had brought forth.....She betook herself to intercede for me, and went to her wonted place, and I to Rome.”*

Thus, A.D. 383, Augustine left his native Africa; and, accompanied by his son, Adeodatus, went to the Eternal City, where he took up his abode in the house of a Manichee. It was not long, however, before he was seized with a severe illness; from which he was not expected to recover, and in which he had not the consolation of a believer, inasmuch as by the Manichæan doctrine he was deprived of the belief in the true Incarnation of Christ. “Had

* Confessions, book v. VIII. 14.

I parted hence," he says, "whither had I departed, but into fire and torments, such as my misdeeds deserved in the truth of Thy appointment?"*

Augustine did not now desire the sacrament of baptism, as upon a similar occasion he had, when a child. But his mother's prayers were rising unceasingly for him; and they won "the healing breath" for him, and Augustine recovered. He refers, with emotion, to what would have been the agony of his mother, had he died in this state of impenitence and heresy.

But he grew more and more restless and discontented; and, displeased with his pupils, and with all around him, he applied for the Rhetoric Professorship at Milan, now vacant: his reputation being great, he succeeded in obtaining it. From this time a new light seemed to open upon him.

* Confessions, ix. 16.

CHAPTER III.

Since I sought
 By prayer the offended Deity to appease,
 Kneel'd, and before Him humbled all my heart;
 Methought I saw Him placable and mild
 Bending His ear; persuasion in me grew
 That I was heard with favour, peace return'd
 Home to my breast.

MILTON.

AUGUSTINE SETTLES AT MILAN—BECOMES A HEARER OF ST. AMBROSE—MONICA COMES TO MILAN—AUGUSTINE'S FRIENDS ALYPIUS AND NEBRIDIUS—HE APPLIES TO SIMPLICIANUS—HISTORY OF VICTORINUS—VISIT OF PONTITIANUS—HIS DISCOURSE—AUGUSTINE'S AGITATION—FINAL CONVICTION OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

AUGUSTINE came to Milan in no happy frame of mind. He might truly say:—

“ Oh, I have done those things that my soul fears
 And my whole heart is sick. My youth hath flown,
 The talents Thou hast given me are all gone,
 And I have nought to pay Thee—but my tears.
 Oh, Thou that hast awaken'd, calm my cares,
 Bind up my wounds! Thou Who didst never spurn
 The wounded and the captive, ne'er didst turn

From him that called Thee, hear Thou my prayers !
Oh wash me in Thy Blood; the leper Thou
Didst cleanse ; Health of the maimed, make me whole ;
Thou that didst wake the dead, burst my soul's sleep!
Low at Thy Feet I throw me, and I know
Thou wilt not cast me from Thee, but my soul
Is sick with sorrow, and I can but weep."

The new teacher of rhetoric brought with him an introduction to St. Ambrose, the revered Bishop of Milan, "known to the whole world as the best of men, Thy devout servant; whose eloquent discourse did then plentifully dispense unto Thy people the flour of Thy wheat, the gladness of Thy oil, and the sober inebriation of Thy wine. To him was I unknowingly led by Thee, that by him I might knowingly be led to Thee. That man of God received me as a father, and shewed me an episcopal kindness on my coming. Thenceforth I began to love him, at first, not indeed as a teacher of the truth (which I utterly despaired of in Thy Church), but as a person kind towards myself."*

Augustine attended St. Ambrose's public preachings; but merely out of curiosity, and not as a disciple: "and yet," he says, "was I drawing nearer by little and little, and that unconsciously. For though I took no pains to learn what he spake, but only to hear how he spake; yet, together with the

* Confessions, book v. XIII. 23.

words which I would choose, came also into my mind the things which I would refuse, for I could not separate them: and while I opened my heart to admit how eloquently he spake, there also entered how truly he spake; but this by degrees.”*

Accordingly Augustine determined to be a catechumen in the Catholic Church, until he should become more fixed in his views; in order to which, he set himself earnestly to work to examine into the Manichæan tenets. For a long time the struggle was carried on, and seemed indeed the struggle of the Evil One against the Good; at length, however, Good prevailed, the Evil One was discomfited; the fresh germs of real faith began to unfold themselves, and Augustine was a believer.

The faithful Monica could not rest at a distance from her beloved son; and accordingly, soon after his establishment at Milan (385), she crossed the sea, “in all perils confiding in God;” and all her troubles were repaid when Augustine told her that he was no longer a Manichee; although not as yet a good Catholic. “Her heart then was shaken with no tumultuous exultation, when she heard that what she daily, with tears, desired of Thee, was already in so great part realized; in that, though I had not yet attained the truth, I was rescued from false-

* Confessions, book v. XIII. 23.

hood: but as being assured that Thou, Who hadst promised the whole, wouldst one day give the rest. Most calmly, and, with an heart full of confidence, she replied to me, 'she believed, in Christ, that, before she departed this life, she should see me a Catholic believer.' ”*

Monica hastened to St. Ambrose, and “hung upon his lips, loving him as an angel of God,” recognizing him as the instrument of her child’s conversion.

Augustine mentions likewise how “piously and obediently she embraced the bishop’s wishes,” in certain matters of discipline wherein the custom of the Churches differed, and St. Ambrose appears to have estimated Monica most highly, congratulating Augustine on having such a mother.

Augustine was now on the verge of a crisis in the mental disease which had so long oppressed him. He was anxious to consult the bishop, but was hindered by St. Ambrose’s constant occupations. “I could not ask of him,” he says, “what I would, being shut out both from his ear and speech by the multitude of busy people, whose weaknesses he served, with whom when he was not taken up, he was either refreshing his body with the sustenance absolutely necessary, or his mind with reading.”

* Confessions, book vi. i. 1.

"Oft-times," he continues, "when we had come to see him (for no man was forbidden to enter, neither was it his wont that any one who came should be announced to him) we saw him reading, and having long sat silent (for who durst intrude on one so intent?) we were fain to depart. I had no opportunity of inquiring what I wished of that so holy oracle of Thine, his breast, unless the thing might be answered briefly. But those tides in me, to be poured out to him, required his full leisure and never found it. . . . I heard him, indeed, every Lord's Day, rightly expounding the Word of Truth among the people; and I was more and more convinced, that all the knots of those crafty calumnies which our deceivers had knit against the Divine Books, could be unravelled."*

He continued listening and pondering over what he heard. "These things I thought on, and Thou wert with me; I sighed, and Thou heardest me; I wavered, and Thou didst guide me; I wandered through the broad way of the world, and Thou didst not forsake me."†

Augustine contemplated and sought after worldly happiness, but God crossed all his hopes. "Thou being the more gracious, the less Thou sufferedst ought to grow sweet to me, which was not Thou."

* Confessions, book vi. III. 4.

† Ibid. v. 8.

All the troubles and travail of his soul Augustine freely discussed with Alypius and Nebridius, his two favourite friends, who had both shared in his religious delusions. The former was by profession a lawyer, a native of Targaste, and a pupil of Augustine's both there and at Carthage. He held a financial office at Rome when his early friend and master arrived there; and on Augustine's removing to Milan, Alypius followed him. Nebridius was a wealthy citizen of Carthage; he was, like the other two, "an ardent searcher after true life," and in pursuit of this, he left his home and his mother and followed Augustine to Milan.

Their eagerness in quest of truth was great. "Life is vain, death uncertain," says Augustine; "if it steals upon us on a sudden, in what state shall we depart hence? . . . What if death itself cut off and end all care and feeling?"*

But it is ever easier to admit evil into the heart than, when once admitted, to root it out; and the three friends, although abjuring the Manichæan heresy, had yet to contend with its poisonous doctrines which were lurking in their minds. All these struggles Augustine viewed as mercies.

"But Thou, Lord, abidest for ever, yet not for ever art Thou angry with us; because Thou pitiest

* Confessions xi. 19,

our dust and ashes, and it was pleasing in Thy sight to reform my deformities; and by inward goads didst Thou rouse me, that I should be ill at ease, until Thou wert manifested to my inward sight. Thus by the secret hand of thy medicining, was my swelling abated, and the troubled and bedimmed eyesight of my mind, by the smarting anointings of healthful sorrows, was from day to day healed.”*

Help was hard at hand. Augustine turned his whole attention to the study of Scripture, chiefly St. Paul's writings, and his difficulties lessened daily. At last he determined upon confessing the sorrows of his heart to Simplicianus, the same good priest who had been guide and teacher to St. Ambrose. Accordingly, without reserve, he laid before him all his wanderings, doubts, and perplexities.

Simplicianus told him the history of Victorinus (one of Augustine's favourite authors); how having become a Christian at heart, he feared openly to avow it, because of the ridicule and persecution of his pagan friends. But reading and thinking over Christ's words, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory,”† he summoned courage, and became first a catechumen, and then was admitted to baptism. And it being offered to

* Confessions, book vii. viii. 12.

† Luke ix. 26.

him to make his profession privately,* Victorinus refused the favour, and in the presence of all men proclaimed his belief in Christ Crucified.

Augustine was greatly moved by this history, but he had still many bonds to break. "I, still under service to the earth, refused to fight under Thy banner, and feared as much to be freed from all incumbrances, as we should fear to be encumbered with them. . . . Nor had I anything to answer Thee calling to me, 'Awake, thou that sleepest.' And when Thou didst on all sides shew me that what Thou saidst was true, I, convicted by the truth, had nothing to answer, but only those dull and drowsy words, 'Anon, anon—presently.' "†

"What warre so cruel, or what siege so sore
As that which strong affections do apply,
Against the forte of Reason evermore,
To bring the soul into captivity!
Their force is fiercer through infirmity.
Of the frail flesh relenting to their rage;
And exercise most bitter tyranny
Upon the parties brought into their bondage.
No wretchedness is like to sinfull villenage."‡

Matters stood thus, when one day Augustine and Alypius received a visit from Pontitianus, an African

* In the early Church, those admitted to the Sacrament made a formal and public declaration of their faith before receiving it. The Apostles' Creed was the customary form.

† Conf. bk viii. v. 12. ‡ Faerie Queen, bk. ii. canto 11.

by birth, and holding a high office at court. Pontitianus was a true and zealous Christian, and finding the Holy Scriptures upon the table, he entered into religious conversation with his countrymen, and spoke to them of St. Anthony, the hermit, and his holy life,* expatiating upon the peaceful piety of the monastic life. Pontitianus further related to them the history of the conversion of two of his friends, who being with the court at Triers, had casually entered the dwelling of some of those pious men who had forsaken the world. Here they had read the life of St. Anthony, and conceived in their minds so great an emulation of his sanctity, that they abandoned their worldly fortunes, even their affianced brides, and devoted themselves to a religious life. Pontitianus, though admiring his friends, had not resolution to follow their example, but his heart was set upon the next world, even while he continued in the strife of this.

When their visitor had departed, Augustine's agitation increased exceedingly. He exclaimed to Alypius, "What! the unlearned start up and take Heaven by force, and we, with our learning, and without heart, be where we wallow in flesh and blood!"

"My fever of mind," writes Augustine, "tore

* St. Anthony lived from A.D. 251 to 356, and was held in extreme reverence by all Christians.

me away from him ; while he, gazing on me in astonishment, kept silence : for it was not my wonted tone ; and my forehead, cheeks, eyes, colour, tone of voice, spake my mind more than the words I uttered. A little garden there was to our lodging, thither the tumult of my breast hurried me, where no man might hinder the hot contention wherein I had engaged with myself, until it should end as Thou knewest : I knew not. Only I was healthfully distracted, and dying to live ; knowing what evil thing I was, and not knowing what good thing I was shortly to become. I retired then into the garden, and Alypius on my steps ; for his presence did not lessen my privacy : or how could he forsake me, so disturbed ? We sat down, as far removed as might be from the house. . . . Thus soul-sick was I, and tormented, accusing myself much more severely than my wont, rolling and turning me in my chain till that were wholly broken, whereby I now was but just, but still was, held. . . . I said within myself, ' Be it done now.' . . . I all but did it, and did it not. . . . The very toys of toys, and vanities of vanities, my ancient mistresses, still held me ; they plucked my fleshly garments, and whispered softly, ' Dost thou cast us off ? and from that moment shall not this or that be lawful for thee for ever ?' . . . And now I much less than half heard them, not openly shewing themselves and contradicting

me, but muttering, as it were, behind my back, and privily plucking me, as I was departing, but to look back upon them But when a deep consideration had, from the secret bottom of my soul, drawn together, and heaped up, all my misery in the sight of my heart, there arose a mighty storm, bringing a mighty shower of tears ; which, that I might pour forth wholly, I rose from Alypius. Solitude was suggested to me, as fitter for the business of weeping ; so I retired so far that even his presence could not be a burthen to me. . . . I cast myself down, I know not how, under a fig-tree, giving full vent to my tears ; and the flood of mine eyes gushed out, an acceptable sacrifice to Thee. And not, indeed, in these words, yet to this purpose, spake I unto Thee, ‘ And Thou, Lord, how long ? wilt Thou be angry for ever ? ’ So as I was weeping, in the most bitter contrition of my heart, I heard, from a neighbouring house, a voice, as of boy or girl, chanting, and oft repeating, ‘ Take up and read, take up and read.’ . . . I began to think intently whether children were wont, in any kind of play, to sing such words ; nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So, checking the torrent of my tears. I arose ; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God, to open the book and read the first chapter I should find.”*

* Confessions, book viii.

He did so ; and lighted on St. Paul's words : " Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."*

" A light, as of serenity," shone into his heart, and " all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

Augustine and Alypius proceeded to tell Monica of the joyful conclusion to their painful struggles ; and her gratitude was fervent and intense for this merciful and abundant answer to her prayers.

* Romans xiii. 13-14.

CHAPTER IV.

We sail the sea of life, a calm one finds,
And one a tempest, and the voyage o'er
Death is the quiet haven of us all.

WORDSWORTH.

AUGUSTINE LEAVES HIS PROFESSION—SUFFERS FROM A PAIN IN THE CHEST—RETIRES TO CASSIACUM—CONSULTS SAINT AMBROSE—HIS BAPTISM—TRAVELS TO OSTIA, WHERE MONICA DIES—AUGUSTINE GOES TO ROME—ADEODATUS DIES—RETURNS TO TARGASTE—IS ORDAINED PRIEST—HIS PREACHING—APPOINTED BISHOP OF HIPPO—HIS OCCUPATIONS AS BISHOP—HIS ADVICE SOUGHT AFTER—LETTER TO PROBA—HIS HUMILITY—WRITES THE “CITY OF GOD”—INVASION OF THE VANDALS—LETTER TO HONORATUS—HIPPO BESIEGED—AUGUSTINE’S LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

THE crisis was at last passed, and Augustine had turned, heart and soul, to serve the Living God.

His great wish was to leave his busy professional career ; yet, with more prudence than is sometimes found in the first ardour of devotion, Augustine deferred doing this until the vintage vacation, which was near at hand, being unwilling to take any steps that bore the semblance of ostentation, or that

might attract public attention to himself. He was likewise suffering from weakness of the lungs, caused, he says, by too great literary labour, and probably increased by the great exertion of mind which he had undergone; and he had felt great trouble and mortification at this visitation, which would necessarily impede his professional career. But now he was able to trace the Hand of God in this instance, as in all others, and he even rejoiced in this additional reason for retiring from the world.

Accordingly, when the vacation arrived, Augustine, together with his mother, Alypius, Nebridius, Adeodatus, and some other catechumens, went to Cassiacum, a villa near Milan, lent to them by Verecundus, who shortly after himself became a Christian. In this retreat, Augustine gave himself up to study, in preparation for the solemn vows he was about to take. He sought also mortification and self-denial, to become the readier for the sacrifice he was meditating, of all his worldly views and prospects. During this season, likewise, he conquered the habit he had acquired of swearing; and long afterwards, in preaching, he alluded to his own experience. "We once swore; but from the time that we began to serve God, and understand the heinous nature of that sin, we were seized with vehement fear; and by fear restrained that inveterate custom. You say you do it by habit.... a more

confirmed habit requires a greater attention. The tongue is a slippery member, and is easily moved ; be, then, the more watchful to curb it. If you refrain to-day, you will find it more easy to refrain to-morrow. I speak from experience I know it is difficult to break your habit : it is what I found myself ; but by fearing God I broke my custom of swearing. When I read His law I was struck with fear ; I strove against my custom ; I invoked God my Helper, and He afforded me His succour not to swear.”*

In the Psalms he found the richest, most unfailling delight. Monica, too, was of great use to them all, with her “tranquillity of age, motherly love, and Christian piety.”

From Cassiacum, Augustin wrote to St. Ambrose a full confession of his former errors, and of his present desires, consulting him as to what might be the fittest preparation for his baptism. St. Ambrose recommended him especially to study the Prophecies of Isaiah.

In the beginning of Lent, A.D. 387, the little band of catechumens returned to Milan, and passed that holy season in penitential and devout exercises ; and, probably, on Easter-Eve they received the sacrament of regeneration at the hands of St. Am-

* Sermon 180 and 307.

brose,—Adeodatus, who was scarcely fifteen, being of the number.*

Shortly afterwards St. Augustine determined to return to Africa, and there devote himself altogether to a religious life. He left Milan, with his mother, his son, and several friends; but they only arrived as far as Ostia, when God, having granted all the prayers of the pious Monica, saw fit to call her from this world. One evening the mother and son stood gazing on the sea, and talking of those things which were of most interest to both: St. Augustine's own words, in relating this incident, are striking,—“We were discoursing together, alone, very sweetly; and forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were inquiring between ourselves, in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man. But yet we gasped with the mouth of our heart, after those heavenly streams of Thy fountain of life, that being bedewed thence, according to our capacity, we might in some sort meditate upon so high a mystery. . . . And when our discourse was brought to that point, that

* Augustine says, “It pleased Alypius also to be with me born again in Thee.”—Confessions, book ix. vi. 14.

the very highest delight of the earthly senses, in the very purest material light, was, in respect of the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention; we, raising ourselves up with a more glowing affection towards the self-same, did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very heaven, whence sun, and moon, and stars, shine upon the earth; yea, we were soaring higher yet by inward musing, and discourse and admiring of Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them."

At last Monica said, "Son, for mine own part, I have no further delight in anything in this life. . . . One thing there was, for which I desired to linger for a while in this life, that I might see thee a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath done this for me more abundantly, that I shall now see thee withal, despising earthly happiness, become His servant. What do I here?"*

Shortly afterwards she was taken ill, and told her children (for her son, Nevigius, was there likewise) that she should die there.

They knew that Monica had always entertained an exceeding desire that her mortal remains might rest near those of Patricius, in Africa, and something they said about it to her; but now such mat-

* Confessions, book ix. x. 26.

ters were indifferent to the dying saint, and she only replied, "Lay this body anywhere; let not the care for that any way disquiet you: this only I request, that you would remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you be."* Some of her friends asked Monica, if she were not loath to leave her body so far from her native land? But she replied, "Nothing is far to God; nor is it to be feared but at the end of the world, He should not recognize whence He were to raise me up."

Monica's illness lasted but nine days; and thus, in the fifty-sixth year of her age, Nov. 387, this venerable woman expired.

Augustine's grief was very deep; but he controlled it, and checked the loud lamentations of his son, saying, that it was unbecoming to mourn with passionate grief for one who had departed with so full a confidence in the Merits of her Lord.

And now having paid the last tribute of affection to his departed mother, he returned to Rome. But he did not return to happiness; for a fresh bereavement very shortly awaited him. His beloved son, Adeodatus, fell sick; and his sickness was unto death. St. Augustine, in lamenting him, speaks of his talents and his piety as being equally remarkable, and adds, "Who but Thou could be the work-

* Confessions, book ix. x. 26.

master of such wonders? Soon didst Thou take his life from the earth; and I now remember him without anxiety.”*

Nebrius was also called to his rest. Of whom Augustine says:—“Now lays he not his ear to my mouth, but his spiritual mouth to Thy fountain, and drinketh as much as he can receive; wisdom in proportion to his thirst, endlessly happy.”†

In the year A.D. 388, St. Augustine returned to Targaste, and settled there, the head of a small religious community, who shared their property, and gave all their time to prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and deeds of charity.

St. Augustine thus writes on the subject of fasting:—“There is another evil of the day.... by eating and drinking we repair the daily decays of our body.... but now the necessity is sweet unto me; against which sweetness I fight, that I be not taken captive, and carry on a daily war by fastings, bringing my body into subjection..... This Thou hast taught me, that I should set myself to take food as physic..... It is often uncertain whether it be the necessary care of the body which is yet asking for sustenance, or whether a voluptuous desirableness of greediness is proffering its service. In this uncertainty the unhappy soul rejoiceth, and therein

* Confessions, bk. ix. vi. 14.

† Ibid. iii. 6.

prepares an excuse to shield itself, glad that it appeareth not what sufficeth for the moderation of health, that under the cloak of health it may disguise the matter of gratification. . . . I hear the voice of my God commanding, 'Let not your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.' Drunkenness is far from me, Thou wilt have mercy that it come not near me; but full feeding sometimes creepeth upon Thy servant, Thou wilt have mercy, that it may be far from me. . . . Placed then amid temptations, I strive daily against concupiscence in eating and drinking. It is not of such nature that I can settle on cutting it off once for all. The bridle of the throat, then, is to be held attempered between slackness and stiffness."*

But Augustine was not destined to remain in retirement; a priest was wanted at Hippo, where he had gone for a short time, and the congregation expressed an earnest desire that Augustine should take the office. He had hitherto shrunk from entering holy orders, as feeling the responsibility to be too awful; but Valerius, Bishop of Hippo, overruled his objections, and A.D. 389 St. Augustine was ordained priest.

At Hippo he continued to lead a conventual life; but his occupations were very arduous, and in

* Confessions, book x. xxxi.

preaching especially he was indefatigable. Four hundred of his sermons are said to be yet extant.* Augustine seems to have been gifted with great eloquence. His classical learning, and the secular acquirements of his youth, were now turned to a more sacred purpose. "He retained," says Milman, "the fervour and energy of the African style with pure and perspicuous Latinity. His ardent imagination was tempered by reasoning powers which boldly grappled with every subject. He possessed, and was unembarrassed by the possession of, all the knowledge which had been accumulated in the Roman world. He commanded the whole range of Latin literature."

Nor was his eloquence fruitlessly exercised : many were led to seek the truth by his earnest, impressive language ; and one of the great abuses of the African Church, *i.e.*, the feasts celebrated in honour of martyrs, which were often scenes of great profligacy and intemperance, were abolished by means of St. Augustine's strenuous efforts and effective words.

Even when suffering from extreme weakness (probably a recurrence of his pulmonary complaint), St. Augustine continued indefatigable in his preaching, as also in the usual teaching of his monastery. Many

* Milman.

of the most eminent of the African bishops were his pupils.

A. D. 395. Valerius, bishop of Hippo, finding that his strength was declining, appointed St. Augustine his coadjutor, and consequently his successor in the see. Valerius died within a year, and, at the age of forty-two, Augustine became Bishop of Hippo.

He was constrained now to quit his monastery; but the episcopal residence assumed a conventual character under St. Augustine, for he caused several priests and deacons to live with him, sharing their table, and in all respects complying with the rules laid down for them. The ecclesiastical revenues, as well as his private fortune, he devoted to the poor. "He had counted the cost, and he acted like a man whose slowness to begin a course was a pledge of zeal when he had once begun it."*

Hospitality was one of the virtues which St. Augustine practised, and his table (which was prepared after the simplest fashion) was free to all; but he was scrupulously particular as to the conversation held there, and especially condemned all scandal and detraction of others, so often the fault of social talk. Possidius gives a motto written over his table:

"Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,
Hanc mensam indignam noverit esse sibi."

"This board allows no vile detraction place,
Whose tongue shall charge the absent with disgrace."†

* Church of the Fathers, chap. 13.

† Butler.

Like St. Ambrose, he was much engaged in hearing secular causes, in which tedious and laborious employment he was unwearied, from Christian motives. He thus speaks of his suitors: "They press on us; they urge, they intreat, they make a tumult; they extort from us to busy ourselves with those things which they love, rather than with investigating the commands of God to our own delight. Certainly those who contend obstinately with each other, and when they oppress good men, despise our sentence and make us lose the time for inquiring into divine things; certainly they justify us in crying out in these words of the body of Christ, "Depart from Me, ye wicked."*

And again: "Much would I prefer, day by day at certain hours, as is ordered in well-regulated monasteries, to do some manual task, and leave the other hours free for reading and prayer, or doing something connected with divine literature, than to endure the tumultuous perplexities of causes strange to me; while either by our sentence we decide, or by our intervention bring to a close, business of a secular nature. But with these troubles the Apostle burdened us not indeed of his own will, but by His by Whom he spoke."†

In a letter to Proculeianus St. Augustine says:

* Sermon on the 119th Psalm.

† De Monas. c. 29.

“About gold, silver, lands, cattle, daily are we addressed, with bowed head, that we may bring men’s quarrels to a close.”*

But while his uprightness and sanctity caused him to be feared, yet all men loved Augustine, for he was full of kindness and affection, and drew all even to him. How much his spiritual counsel was sought after, we have numerous proofs. The judicious apostolic advice he gives is valuable to us even at this distance of time, as well as to those for whom it was specially intended. To Casulanus, who consults him on various matters of discipline, St. Augustine commands that he should, as far as possible, comply with the customs of the place he is in. He says, concerning daily Communion, that if done with humility and prayer, it is well; but that he does not condemn those who only communicate weekly, in order to spend more time in preparation. To Ecdicia, who had an unkind husband, he gives much excellent counsel, desiring her to give way in all things indifferent; that as her husband chooses her to be gaily dressed, she must obediently wear it, and with a prayerful spirit, strive to “be humble in rich clothing.”

To Proba, who was another of the numerous applicants for St. Augustine’s instructions, the bishop wrote as follows :—

* Epis. 147.

“Augustine, bishop, servant of Christ and of Christ’s servants, to that religious handmaid of God, Proba, health in the Lord of lords.

“Bearing in mind your request and my promise, that I would write to you on the subject of prayer, when He to Whom we pray had given me time and power, I ought, without delay, to discharge my engagement, and in the love of Christ consult your pious desire. . . . How should you rather employ your widowhood than in continued prayer, night and day, according to the admonition of the apostle? For he says, ‘Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers, night and day’; although it is at first sight strange, that one who is so noble according to this world, like you, rich, and mother of such a family, and therefore, though a widow, not desolate, should have her heart engaged and supremely possessed by the care to pray, save that you have the wisdom to perceive that in this world and in this life no soul can be beyond care.

“Therefore He Who has given you that thought, is in truth doing therein what He promised so wonderfully and pitifully to His disciples, when saddened, not for themselves, but for the race of men, and despairing that any could be saved, on His saying that it was easier for a camel to enter a needle’s eye, than for a rich man the kingdom of

heaven, He answered, 'With God is easy what with man is impossible. . . . And so, for love of true life, you ought to think yourself even in this world, desolate, whatever be your outward prosperity.

"In this life's darkness, in which we are pilgrims from the Lord, and walk by faith, and not by sight, the Christian soul ought to esteem itself desolate, lest it cease from prayer; and so learn to fix the eye of faith on the words of divine and holy Scriptures as a lamp in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts. This lamp is ineffably supplied from the light which so shines in the darkness as not to be comprehended by it; by the sight of which the heart is cleansed through faith. For 'blessed are the clean in heart, for they shall see God.' And 'we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' Then will be true life after death, and true consolation after desolation. 'When Christ, Who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.' This is the true life, which the rich are bid lay hold of by good works; and this is the true consolation for which the widow now has desolation. . . . To obtain this blessed life, we are taught by the true Blessed Life Himself to pray, not in much speaking, as though the more wordy we were, the surer we were heard; since we pray to Him, Who as the Lord Himself says, knows

our necessities before we ask of Him. But if so, it may seem strange, why, though He has forbidden much speaking, yet while knowing our necessities before we ask of Him, He has encouraged us to pray, in the words, ‘Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.’ It may surprise us, until we understand, that our Lord and God does not wish our will to be made clear to Him, which He cannot but know; but that, our desire being exercised in prayers, we may be able to receive what He prepares to give. In faith indeed, and hope, and charity, we are always praying, with uninterrupted desire; but we ask God in words also, at certain intervals of hours and times, that by those outward signs, we may admonish ourselves, what progress we have made in this desire, and may stimulate ourselves the more to heighten it. We recall our minds at certain hours to the business of prayer, from those other cares and businesses, by which that desire itself is, in a measure chilled, admonishing ourselves, by the words of prayer, to reach forward to that which we desire, lest what is already chilling may altogether cool, and may be altogether quenched, unless now and then rekindled.

“This being the case, even prolonged prayer, when we have time for it,—that is, when other good and necessary actions are not superseded (though even in the midst of them we ought, in desire, ever

to be praying),—such long prayer is neither wrong nor useless. Nor is this continued prayer, as some think, much speaking: many words is one thing, and continued affection another. For it is written of the Lord Himself, that He ‘passed the night in prayer,’ and that He ‘prayed more largely’; in which, what did He but set us an example, in this world making supplications, in season, with the Father hearing them for evermore? To *speak* much, is to urge our necessities in prayer with superfluous words; but to *pray* much, is to knock for Him, to Whom we pray, with prolonged and pious exercise of the heart. This is often done, more by groans than speeches, by weeping, than by addresses; for He sets our tears in His Sight, and our groaning is not hid from Him Who, having made all things by His words, does not ask for words of men. . . . Though you be opulent, pray as one of the poor; for you have not yet the true riches of the world to come, where there is no dread of loss. Though you have children and grandchildren, yet pray as one desolate, for all temporal things are uncertain, though they are to remain, even to the end of this life, for our consolation. And surely remember to pray with earnestness for me; for I am unwilling that you should render to me any dangerous honour, yet should withhold that my necessary support. . . . Strive ye in prayer. . . . In fastings, in

watchings, and all chastisement of the body, prayer is specially needed. Let each of you do what she can; what one cannot, she does in her who can, if in her she loves that which she therefore does not do herself because she cannot. Accordingly, she who has less strength, must not hinder her who has more; and she who has more must not be hard with her who has less; for your conscience is owed to God; to none of yourselves owe anything, but to love one another. May God hear you, Who is able to do above what we ask or understand.”*

Demetrias, the grand-daughter of Proba, was a pupil of St. Augustine, and a worthy one; for, turning away from the world, its cares and pleasures, she devoted her beauty and her wealth to God's service; her mother and grandmother rejoicing in her having thus chosen the better part which could not be taken away from her.

But, whilst to all who thus lived by St. Augustine's priestly rules and direction, his word was as a law, his own estimation of himself continued meek and lowly. Of this we find a strong exemplification in a correspondence, concerning certain matters of controversy, between St. Augustine and St. Jerome. St. Augustine, as a bishop, might naturally have been inclined to esteem his own authority as greater

* Church of the Fathers.

than that of his opponent, yet we find him expressing himself thus: "I entreat you, again and again, to correct me confidently when you perceive me to stand in need of it; for though the office of a bishop be greater than that of a priest, yet in many things is Austin inferior to Jerome."*

Nor is this, by any means, a single instance of the same apostolic meekness. St. Augustine was always ready to submit both himself and his works to correction. In a letter to the Archbishop of Carthage, after confessing some frailties, he proceeds: "This I write to discover my evils to you; that you may know in what things to pray to God for my infirmities."

In one of his sermons, he says: "He knoweth, in Whose Presence I speak, yea, in Whose Presence I think, that I take not so much pleasure in popular praises, as I feel anxious and harassed how they live who praise me. For to be praised by ill-livers I mislike, abhor, and detest—it is a grief to me; but praise from well-livers, should I say I mislike it, I lie; should I say I like it, I fear lest I should be more desirous of unrealities than of reality. I neither wholly like, nor wholly mislike it; not wholly like, lest I should be endangered by the praise of men; nor wholly mislike, lest they to whom I preach should be ungrateful."†

* Butler.

† Aug. Serm. 333, in die ordinat. suæ, § 1.

In the year 398, St. Augustine attended the Council of Carthage, at which the Donatists received their condemnation. During the greater part of his episcopal life, St. Augustine was engaged in combating against, and checking, the Manichæan, Donatist, and Pelagian, heresies, which had continued to gather strength. Against these heresies many of his ablest controversial writings were directed. But the works which have most tended to spread the holy bishop's influence over all Christendom, are his Confessions, which were written shortly after his consecration, and the treatise entitled "The City of God," which was the fruit of twenty years of labour, and was published A.D. 413.

Of this work, Milman says: "It was unquestionably the noblest work, both in its original design, and in the fulness of its elaborate execution, which the genius of man had as yet contributed to the support of Christianity.....It takes a comprehensive survey of the whole religion and philosophy of antiquity; and has preserved more on some branches of these subjects than the whole surviving Latin literature. 'The City of God' was not merely a defence, it was likewise an exposition, of Christian doctrine."*

In these labours, St. Augustine's life passed

* History of Christianity, bk. iii. chap. 10.

away without much incident, except such as belonged to the exercise of his important episcopal functions.

His closing years were not destined, however, to be untroubled. The Vandals, who were Arians in creed, and fierce and barbarous in their warfare, crossed the straits of Gibraltar, and laid waste the fertile shores of Africa, A.D. 428. Possidius, a pupil of St. Augustine's, describes the result of their fearful inroads: cities in ruins, their inhabitants killed, or in a captivity worse than death; churches burned, or otherwise destroyed, and the faithful congregations scattered and dispersed.

Several Christian bishops were tortured by the barbarians, in the hope of extracting from them Church treasures. Augustine was now old; he had numbered seventy-four years, and his health was very feeble. He wrote from his bed, saying, "I suffer, yet am I well; for I am as God would have me to be." Of death, the venerable saint had no fear. "What love of Christ can that be," he asks, "which fears lest He comes Whom we love?"

Under these circumstances, Honoratus, Bishop of Thebenna, wrote to him to inquire whether it was lawful for the ruler of a Church to fly from his charge in order to save his life.

It was a subject on which conflicting opinions had already been expressed in the Church. The

great Athanasius, as we have seen, had fled several times before his enemies ; and he held it lawful to do so, from Scripture precedent. St. Cyprian had adopted a similar course.

Augustine answered as follows : “ Be God’s people, where we are, ever so little, yet, if they stay, we, whose ministration is necessary thereto, must say to the Lord, ‘Thou art our strong rock and house of defence.’ Let such of Christ’s ministers as are special objects of persecution, fly, so that they who are not thus attacked desert not the Church. . . . But in a case where all : bishops, clergy, and people, are in some common danger either let all remove into some fortified place, or, if any are obliged to remain, let them not be left by those who have to supply their ecclesiastical necessity ; so that they may survive in common, or suffer in common what their Father decrees they should undergo. . . . He who awaits, when he might escape, the murderous career of a foe, lest he should desert Christ’s ministry, without which man can neither become, nor continue, Christians, has attained a greater fruit of charity than he who, after flying, not for the brethren’s sake, but for himself, and then being captured, confesses Christ and accepts martyrdom. . . . When the people remain, and the ministers flee, and the ministration is suspended, what is that but the guilty flight of hire-

lings, who care not for the sheep? Let us only consider, when matters come to an extremity of danger, and there is no longer any means of escape, how persons flock to the Church, of both sexes, and all ages, begging for baptism or absolution, and one and all for consolation, and the consecration and application of the sacraments. Now, if the ministers are wanting, what ruin awaits those who depart this life unregenerate. . . . If there is a plain expedience in some ministers flying at the prospect of a sweeping calamity, in order that the remnant of the flock, when the slaughter is over, may still have those who can minister to them . . . the lot seems the fairest decision, in fault of others. God judges better than man in perplexities of this sort ; whether it be His Will to reward the holier among them with the crown of martyrdom, and to spare the weak ; or again to strengthen the latter to endure evil, removing those from life whom the Church of God can spare the better. However, better we cannot do in these perils than pray the Lord our God to have mercy upon us.”*

St. Augustine was soon to share in the danger of which he spake ; multitudes of fugitives took refuge in Hippo, and A.D. 340 the dreaded hordes of the Vandals invested the city and laid siege to it.

* Epis. 228, translation in Church of the Fathers.

Possidius gives an account of these latter days :—
“ We used continually to converse together,” he says, “ about the misfortunes in which we were involved ; and contemplated God’s tremendous judgments, which were before our eyes, saying, ‘ Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and true are Thy Judgments.’ One day, at meal time, as we talked together, Augustine said, ‘ Know ye, that in this our present calamity, I pray God to vouchsafe to rescue this besieged city ; or, if otherwise, to give His servants strength to bear His Will, or, at least, to take me to Himself out of this world.’ We followed his advice ; and both ourselves, and our friends, and the whole city, offered up the same prayer with him. In the third month of the siege, he was seized with a fever, and took to his bed, and was reduced to the extreme of sickness.”

During his days of health and strength, St. Augustine had dwelt much on penitence ; deep and lasting had been his own repentance, and many a soul wandering in the dark paths of sin had he, under his Master’s blessing, arrested whilst it was yet time ; and now when the summons came to him that must come to all, he reckoned not up his good deeds, or that wherefore he should receive his recompense or reward ; but rather, his spirit being imbued with the penitence, not of a moment, but of a life, to the last wept his sins, uttering with his

dying breath, "If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?" So true is it, that "all, even the slightest sin, is indeed worthy of more sorrow than we can feel for it; and the holy have wept more bitterly the infirmities from which our nature is not yet freed, than most of us even deadly sin." Surely we may believe that in those last moments, ere "living death" was changed into immortal life, the saint realized the world unseen as he had never before done. He had prayed, "O Lord God, give peace unto us; for Thou hast given us all things; the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, which hath no evening";* and now his prayer was about to be granted—the house of rest was nearly gained, and on the 28th of August, A.D. 430, the soul which had long been athirst for God, even the living God, came to appear before the presence of God; he had tarried the Lord's leisure, he had trusted in Him, and now his heart was comforted. "Blessed are they that do His Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the City."

Possidius continues: "He was wont to say, that after receiving baptism, even approved Christians and priests ought not to depart from the body with-

* Confessions, book xiii. 35.

out a fitting and sufficient course of penitence ; accordingly, in the last illness, of which he died, he set himself to write out the special penitential psalms of David, and to place them against the wall, so that, as he lay in bed, in the days of his sickness, he could see them ; and so he used to read and weep abundantly. And, lest his attention should be disturbed by any one, about ten days before his death, he begged us who were with him, to hinder persons entering his room, except at the times when his medical attendants came to see him, or his meals were brought him. This was strictly attended to ; and all that time was given to prayer.....He slept with his fathers, in a good old age, sound in limb, unimpaired in sight or hearing, and while we stood by, beheld, and prayed with him.”*

It was on Aug. 28, 430, that this much-tried servant of God departed this life ; and that day is dedicated to his memory by both our own Church, and the Church of Rome.

Soon after his death, the Vandals entered Hippo, from whence the citizens had fled. In the general conflagration which ensued, St. Augustine's library seems to have been providentially preserved.

A modern author writes thus : “The desolation which at that era swept over the face of Africa,

* Church of the Fathers, chap. 12.

was completed by the subsequent invasion of the Saracens. The five hundred churches are no more. The voyager gazes on the sullen rocks which line its coasts, and discovers no token of Christianity to cheer its gloom. Hippo has ceased to be an episcopal city; but its great teacher, though dead, yet speaks; his voice is gone out into all lands, and his words into the end of the world. He needs no dwelling-place whose home is the Catholic Church; he fears no barbarism, or heretical desolation, whose creed is to last unto the end.”*

* Church of the Fathers, chap. 12.

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